

TOMB RAIDER: THE MOVIE & THE GAME

# Femme Fatales

AMERICAN  
NIGHTMARE'S  
DEBBIE ROCHON

ANGELINA  
JOLIE

THE FILMS  
OF  
ROLFE  
KANEFSKY:

PRETTY COOL  
THERE'S NOTHING  
OUT THERE





# Femme Fatales

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VOLUME 10 NUMBER 3

The Luscious Ladies of Horror, Fantasy & Science Fiction

JULY/AUGUST 2001

The Red, White, and Blue never looked so good (then when draped around actress Debbie Rochon, who is featured for this issue's cover story).

Although she hails from Canada, we think Rochon represents the quintessential American success story: despite a difficult beginning on the streets of Vancouver, Rochon has progressed with ingenuity, intelligence, and a rock-solid work ethic. She studied her craft with great seriousness, yet maintains an easygoing sense of humor about her work. Whether she's playing a psychotic killer or an owner of a training camp for lesbian gladiators, Rochon consistently gives her best, which is why she is one of the most popular and busiest actors working in independent films today.

In writer/director Jan Knealy's new film *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*, which will have an international release on video in the near future, Rochon plays "Jenna Toppin," a female serial killer who is the poster child of rage and violence. Writer Mike Wolf was on the set in Texas during the making of *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* and talked to Knealy and many of the actors about what it was like working on this independent horror film and why its fresh approach sets it apart from others in the genre.

We'll also talk to one of the most beautiful and versatile actresses in Hollywood, Angelina Jolie, who brings the computer game femme phenomenon Lara Croft to life in the summer hit *TOMB RAIDER*. In addition, we look into the story behind one of the most popular videogames in history.

And finally, the work of director Rolfe Kanesky, whose horror spoof, *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE* has been causing a buzz on the Internet for years. Why? Because many believe it to be the original inspiration for the movie *SCREAM*. *TNOT* is celebrating its 10th anniversary with a special edition of the film, to be released on video and DVD, that's loaded with extras. Kanesky recently returned from Cannes where he landed a distributor for his spy comedy *PRETTY COOL*, which will have its theatrical release in the next few months. Very cool. Enjoy summer.

—Lisa & Lisa



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# FATALITY

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI

●Cable's TNT will present **THE MISTS OF AVALON**, a new, four-hour miniseries, based on the novel by Marion Zimmer Bradley in July. The film is a retelling of the King Arthur legend, this time through the eyes of the women. The ancient Christian religion and the growing Christian faith threaten to destroy the kingdom. Angelica Huston plays Viviane, the mystical Lady of the Lake, who is the high priestess of the Isle of Avalon, the seat of power for the old religion. Viviane plans to save Avalon by creating a royal lineage that will produce King Arthur, who will embrace both religions. While she trains young Morgane (Julianne Margulies) as her successor, Viviane's evil sister Morgause, played by Joan Allen, is set to destroy her plans.

On one of the main themes in the film, Angelica Huston said, "Christianity involves guilt, and when guilt enters into the equation, it creates a whole new area. Guilt wasn't really a quality that was associated with Paganism. The one major area was incest, which was always a no-no. But I think most is very much a theme in the film. I think the union between Christianity and Paganism could have worked, but it was the barbarity of the Saxons that was really the major downfall of both Camelot and Avalon."

●Shooting has begun on the romantic fantasy **KATE AND LEO: FOLD**. Meg Ryan stars as a present-day independent woman who finds herself involved with Leopold, an English aristocrat inventor who travels from the 18th century to modern-day Manhattan.

●In 1941, Republic Pictures released a slate of topflight serials. Included in the mix was **JUNGLE GIRL** (FF 109), loosely based on a novel by Tarzan creator Edgar Rice Burroughs. Deep in the African jungle, a band of wild renegades are out to steal the sacred Nkomo diamonds. Standing in their way is Nyoka, the jungle girl. Beautiful Frances Gifford starred as Nyoka Meredithe and for 15 action-packed chapters she survived poison gas, jungle beasts, raging torrents of water, a killer gorilla, and other jungle perils while she battled the jungle murderers.

Once the studio rights to the tale expired, the serial lay dormant. Oklahoma-based VCI Home Entertainment has been riding a habit of finding and restoring older B-



Frances Gifford as "Nyoka Meredithe" in Republic Pictures' **JUNGLE GIRL**, now available on DVD. For more on Frances and other jungle space, check out FF109.

time and serials that the AFI would never get around to. Among the serials that the 25-year-old company has restored are **THE PHANTOM**, **CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT**, and **TERRY AND THE PIRATES**. Several years ago, they discovered that Damon Burroughs, son of the title writer, had the rights to **JUNGLE GIRL**, and they made a deal for the video rights. Unfortunately, their print was a censored version that had several key minutes cut. Now the distributor has a new, complete print that they've released on DVD.

"We have a brand new print that we found at the British Film Institute," said Bob Blair, chief VCI honcho. "It was a 35mm fine-grain print and it was just gorgeous. We restored all the clips that were cut. My dad is the real film collector who has a love of the old serials. He's made it his life's work to search out those old offshoots."

Many of these serials were based on comic books and radio characters and the rights fell into a legal maze over the years. "We found that the rights reverted back to the owner of the old comics or radio shows," Blair explained. "After many years, we found who owned the rights to the film. If we have to use three or four prints, we'll take a scene from this one and a scene from that one and cobble them together to make the best-looking, most complete print we can. Once we do that, it's digitally transferred on a new system so we got the best print we can."

●Buffy alumni Eliza Dushku

stars in Arifan's **SOUL SURVIVOR**, a horror film with **CARNIVAL OF SOULS** returns due in August. Dushku plays a young college student who, after surviving a tragic car accident, begins to experience other-worldly events with death always hovering about her. Steve Carpenter directed the thriller.

●**THE MUMMY RETURNS** may have racked up those big grosses at the box office, but producer Alan Smitzky has launched his own mummy film with **ANCIENT EVIL**, [no connection to the Steve DeCortese/Rapid Heart Pictures 2000 release, due for its own sequel this winter] just released on DVD by Image Entertainment. The film features bubbly Amber Newman, Gabrielle Hall. The impressive Regan Russell, Jena Bonser, and British bombshell Zoe Paul. On an expedition to Peru, George Reno, an archeologist, discovers the tomb of the first Inca Queen and unleashes her mummy. The resurrected Queen needs the power of last to complete her transformation. Months later in Egypt, a guide finds a strange amulet and gives it to his wife Sasha, who becomes possessed by the Inca Queen. What she's doing in the Mid East I don't know. "I had to do a belly dance for the guests who came around to the house in the film," said gorgeous blonde model-actress Zoe Paul who plays Sasha. "Because I'm Greek, I have good belly-dancing movements anyway, which I got from my mother. My mother is Greek and Egyptian and my father

Italian and French. When they were creating for the movie, they asked me if I was any good at dancing. I didn't say 'yes,' I just started dancing in front of them. I knew what they were looking for and they said 'That's it, you're booked.' I liked it, it was something that I was good at and I was pleased to show off my skills. I never took dancing lessons, it just came naturally through the family."

●Gorgeous ex-model Angie Everhart, who made a splash in her first film **BORDELLO OF BLOOD**, has just wrapped **HEART OF STONE**, a psychological thriller about a serial killer.

●The original Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Kristy Swanson, teams up with **FIRST WAVE** veteran Brandy Ledford in director Ron Skaggs's sci-fi thriller **ZEBRA LOUNGE**.

●For the time she actually spent in front of a camera, Linda Lovelace left a lasting impression, more symbolic than substantial. Two films, **DEEP THROAT** and its sequel, and eight stag films comprise the entire Lovelace catalog. The one-time porn star and now one of the industry's finest actresses, laid out her trials and tribulations in her books *Ordeal* and *Out of Bondage*. Author of a new book, *The Complete Linda Lovelace*, Eric Danville was one of the many who found her tale of abuse a bit hard to swallow. "Since I worked in the industry, I have always been fascinated by her story," Danville. "Being the biggest star and turning into pornography's biggest ORLO, I wanted to do an article on her for *Vanity Fair* or *Esquire*. I got her phone number from a friend of mine who worked in the business and called her up. I told her what I was about and that I was working for *Some* magazine at the time. She was not terribly impressed and basically turned me down and told me to never call her again."

Having been cut off from his primary source for a mainstream publication article, Danville decided to turn his growing passion into a book. "I thought it was a way of gathering together all the pop culture references to her. It's a lot more about the pop culture aspect than a straight biography of her that had been done several times. I wanted to get everything media-related, pop-culturally related in one place and straighten out my own collection as well."

A year and a half later, his work on *The Complete Linda Lovelace*

was taking shape, and Danville decided to edit the footage and tell her the book was nearing completion. When Loveless realized that Danville wasn't going to bash her in his book, she became more agreeable to the project.

By the time, Danville's skepticism about her version of the OCEP THROAT controversy had been tempered. "During my research, I came across a couple of interviews with Chuck Traynor where he practically admitted that he had been beating her," said Danville. "In one by the film's director, Gerald Danino, he said he was making her do all this stuff and if it didn't look like she was enjoying it, he would beat the shit out of her. So I realized that there was actually something to her story because she was telling the truth, at least about that, so I changed my mind about a lot of it. I know a lot of women like that who can't get out of abusive relationships."

"You can watch her entire X-rated catalog in less time than it takes to watch TITANIC. It's amazing when you think of the impact she

had on the industry and the legal precedents that the film set. She only worked in the business for about a month."

Danville self-published *The Complete Linda Lovelace*, which can be purchased by sending \$25.00 to Power Process Publishing, 165 2nd Avenue, #335, New York, NY 10003.

● Another model-turned-actress, the stunning Amber Smith, has completed *RESPONSIBLE DOUBT*. She plays homicide detective Charlie Harmon, who kills a man suspected of being The Baptist, a sex serial killer. At the time, Harmon was involved with abusing drugs and alcohol. Now, two years later, she has straightened herself out, but a score of murders point to The Baptist as the killer. Did Harmon kill the wrong man?

● Production began in May on the Sci-Fi Channel's new film *FIRESTARTER II: THE NEXT CHAPTER*, the sequel to the 1994 hit based on the Stephen King novel. Charlaine McGee, who had been endowed with pyrokinetic powers,

3-volcano Michelle Bauer romps around as a nude monster in Jess Franco's LUST FOR FRANKENSTEIN



Is Amy Amber Smith just finished filming her latest flick, *RESPONSIBLE DOUBT*. Want more Amber? (who doesn't?) Order volume 79 to see her scolding layout.

is still on the lan after 30 years. The experiments that produced her have continued and there is now an army of children with psycho powers. Marguerite Moreau takes over the role of "Charlie" McGee originated by Drew Barrymore in the first film. Maquie McDowell subs for George C. Scott this time around as the marauding Rambler.

Moreau just landed the lead in *QUEEN OF THE DAMNED*, based on the novel by Ann Rice. She plays Jesse Reeves who has inherited the ability to control the supernatural. Although mortal, Jesse is a descendant of the vampire Mabius.

● The creature created by Dr. Frankenstein is on the loose again, this time played by Michelle Bauer! That's right, the scream queen is back as the Frankenstein monster in Jess Franco's *LUST FOR FRANKENSTEIN*. Since the actress is nude throughout the entire film, she shows a lot more titbits than Boris Karloff ever displayed. Frankenstein's daughter, Maria, played by long-time Franco associate Line Horney, is led by the spirit of her dead father to his monstrous female creation. The doctor named the monster "Goddess." There are only two things on her mind, sex and blood, and soon Maria is sup-

plying both. American actress Amber Newman went to Spain for a small role as a singer who, after being seduced by Maria, ends up on Frankenstein's operating table.

● *PSYCHO* voter Anne Heche stars with Jeff Goldblum in *BEYOND SUSPICION*, a new thriller from Fox Home Entertainment, written and directed by Matt Tarsik. Goldblum plays John Nolan, an insurance salesman boxed with his life. All that changes when a liquor store holdup goes bad. The robber, Fugate Rose, dies in his arms and Nolan decides to assume the dead man's identity. Heche plays Lucy Brown, a young woman who had corresponded with Rose while he was in prison. Although she has never met him, Brown had planned to meet the ex-con. Nolan meets her and passes himself off as Rose with bizarre consequences.

● Denise Crosby's supernatural western *TRIGUN: THE LEGEND OF PELIGRUM* has been completed. Crosby plays Sarah, a pioneer woman traveling the post-Civil War trail west with her family. Suddenly they are attacked by a band of murderers led by a strange man called Blade. Her son and husband are killed and Sarah barely makes it to the nearest town, only to find it in

the hands of the ruthless Blade, Pelpetum Granger, who has been in an age-old struggle with Blade, swords and their supernatural struggle resumes. "This character, Sarah, is kind of the catalyst for these two men who have not over the centuries in many iterations to fight," said Crosby. "Sarah is somehow always present and is the one that brings them together. It's kind of how these things are destined to repeat and through the power and strength of Sarah, Pelpetum is called forth."

● **Witchblade**, the best-selling Top Cow comic book created by Mark Schultz, has been turned into a series for TNT. Nancy Butler, who starred in the original feature, returns as Officer Sara Pezzini in the show, which premieres in August. While investigating her partner's death, Pezzini encountered the Witchblade, a symbolic weapon that has existed through the centuries, always worn by a woman. The strange artifact attaches itself to the cop, allowing her to use its vast powers to fight evil.

● **Famous daughters** make good! Those two stellar researchers, Dr. Henry Jekyll and Dr. Victor Frankenstein, both had to make offspring, at least according to a pair of B-movies from the '90s recently released on DVD by Image Entertainment. In the 1998 horror film **FRANKENSTEIN'S DAUGHTER**, the scientist's son collides together a new creature and, although you'd never know by looking at it, she's a female. We know the basics, after killing her, the mad Doc uses the brain of Sally Todd, a beautiful blonde who had been the February 1957 *Playmate* of the month. Then and pretty Gloria Taubert has the titular lead in **DAUGHTER OF DR. JEKYLL**, released in 1957 and directed by Edgar G. Unger, the B-movie maestro who directed Universal's **THE BLACK CAT**. Taubert thinks she has inherited the demonic traits of her split-personality father and believes she plays the right seeking victims. Poor Gloria. No sooner does she discover it's all a plot than she goes and marries a monster from outer space the next year.

● A film nearly 12 years in the making, **ELVIRA'S HAUNTED HILLS** is in its final stages of production, with a pending release in October, 2001. The film shot entirely in Romania, is a tribute to the Vincent Price/Eldred Allen Poe films of yesteryear. Combining the elements of **FALL OF THE HOUSE OF Usher** and **PIT AND THE PENDULUM**, director Sam Irvin dedicates the film to his late Papa. "I was such a fan of his," says Irvin of the horror film icon. "We correspond-



Everyone's favorite goddess Elvira is back and starring in **ELVIRA'S HAUNTED HILLS**, Sam Irvin's tribute to the classic Vincent Price/Eldred Allen Poe films.

ed through far mail for many years. He was such a gentleman, always wrote all of his fans back. Eventually I made my first film and he saw a review of it in the *Los Angeles Times*. So I got the letter from him saying what a lack he got out of seeing my name and my film reviewed. He said, 'We do go back a long way. Don't we? From your youth to my old age.' We even discussed working together on a project someday, but unfortunately that never happened. So this one is for Vincent."

**ELVIRA'S HAUNTED HILLS** definitely lives up to the thrills, chills, musical numbers, lots of laughs, and great boob shots of the 1988 feature film **ELVIRA, MISTRESS OF THE DARK**. This time, her sororities is portrayed by **ROCKY HORROR** creator Richard O'Brien. Fresh out of the studio from recording his latest album "Absolute O'Brien," placing her opposite Elvira-Double-G turns out to be a match made in heaven. Look for a full review of the new film, a cover story on the mistress by Jason Sedhorn and fellow FF journalist Jason Paul Cullum's retrospective on director Sam Irvin in our October issue. Until then, unpleasant dreams.

● **Blonde bombshell** Rachel Robbins, who's juggling acting,

modeling, and controversial assignments, has created a new fantasy character, **Blondezilla**. This is one chick who can give that Japanese karate kid a run for his money. **Blondezilla** is a 800-foot tall buxom chick with a blonde tail. How can you take that seriously? Well, you're not supposed to. "Blondezilla is the female 2001 version of Godzilla," said Robbins. "It's very long-limbed, very campy. It's comedic. We started working with graphic artists who want to do it as an online comic book but with live pictures and graphic art instead of the traditional drawings. They did the best stuff for me. They're full of colors and exploding buildings, crashing helicopters, a neon Times Square, all sorts of gongs on. People just go nuts over it."

Currently, Robbins and her collaborators are working on a script that can be turned into a TV show, movie, or comic book. "It's really funny," laughed Robbins. "What would happen if she got her period? You think your girlfriend has PMS? Think 600 feet of PMS. There's a team of eight Asian guys who follow her around. We want one of them to speak like a girl from Brooklyn and another like a **SUPERHERO** character. We're trying to keep it really

fresh but at the same time keeping kind of true to the whole Godzilla format."

Robbins herself will be the model for the towering female. In the world of **Blondezilla**, Rachel is a lab assistant who has to put up with the sexual harassment of her superiors because she has aspirations of creating a revolutionary hair growth formula. "She kind of gets abused by the scientists, slapped on the ass and what not," said Robbins. "But she wants to work on a hair growth potion, so she sees this as a great vehicle to work in the lab at night." When Rachel tries the new formula on herself, the experiment goes awfully wrong and, when, **Blondezilla**!

"She is reptilian with a tall made of blonde hair instead of scales," added Robbins. "She's a Kutz and all the destruction that she does is not from malice, it's always an accident. She didn't mean to explode those helicopters. There was just a noise in her ear and she tried to swat them out of the way. She's stomping through the city and the helicopters are flying around and she looks down and 'Dams, I broke a dew.' She's still all women."

**Blondezilla** becomes Rachel's alter ego. Like the Incredible Hulk, emotional stress will bring out the beast in her and mid-morning Rachel becomes a 600-foot posed off-oviger. "I'm interested in exploring the character out," she said. "I want to own the title, the storyline, the images, but I'm an actress primarily and that's what I do. That's my career and that's what I love."

As an actress, Robbins recently starred in director David Farrow's new film **THE BODY SHOP**. "The script was a throwback to 70s horror films with lots of suspense. There weren't a lot of special effects and the blood was held to a minimum. I play Amy Rand and my character is the girl who lives in the horror movie. There was a remote amount of nudity, only a skinny-dipping scene."

She was also in front of the cameras for an **M&M's** commercial that will be aired in Europe. Robbins plays a staffer writing to her agent in a "50s-style Los Angeles office. "Oh, that was a big stretch for me," laughed Robbins, who is getting ready to move to the City of Angels. "We done all I can do as an actress in New York. They really pigeon-holed me as the acry blonde bimbo, hooker, stripper-read-dar. Those roles are cool but I'm going to age eventually and then what am I going to play, the aging-stripper, the aging-hooker? That's a pathetic character." □

RACHAEL ROBBINS IS

# BLONDEZILLA



# TOMB RAIDER'S

## Angelina Jolie

On bringing the popular computer game heroine to life.

by Alan Jones



**T**OMB RAIDER director Simon West only ever wanted one actress to play cyber-babe Lara Croft in his \$100 million fantasy adventure based on the top-selling computer game. And that actress was Angelina Jolie, the GIRL INTERRUPTED Oscar-winner and star of GONE IN 60 SECONDS, PLAYING BY HEART, THE BONE COLLECTOR, and ORIGINAL SIN. Angelina Jolie admitted, "Playing Lara Croft is the hardest job I've ever done. She's not moody, brooding, or so wrapped up in herself like a lot of the other characters I've tackled before. Lara is very clear about herself and her goals and overly capable in an almost beyond-human way. I certainly don't feel like that when I wake up every morning so I often had to snap myself into 'Lara mode' in order to take on the world like she does every single day. It's so hard to stay in a positive, healthy, clear, and brave state of mind all the time. It's much easier to internalize and remain dark, which is what I've been used to playing up until now. The strange thing is, when I accepted the Lara part, I thought it was going to be a major departure from everything I've done in the past. Okay, it's a blockbuster fantasy and I've never done one of those before, but the essence of Lara has turned out to be remarkably similar to some other roles I've played. She's alone, focused on justice, is a little crazy in many ways, bold definitely, loves her freedom, and is very sexual. Those are traits I admire in people in general and the themes I've explored in movies before. Lara is the perfect woman in my estimation."

The daughter of COMING HOME Oscar-winning actor Jon Voight and Marcheline Bertrand, Angelina Jolie (her middle name) majored in film at New York University and then trained and performed at the famous Lee Strasberg Theatre Institute before becoming a professional model. After appearing in rock videos for such artists as Meat Loaf, she acted in five student films directed by her brother James Haven before making her screen debut in CYBORG 2: GLASS SHADOW (1993). The first time she worked in Britain prior to TOMB RAIDER was on the hi-tech thriller HACKERS (1995). Jonny Lee Miller, her co-star in that movie, became her first husband and the story goes that Jolie accepted the Lara Croft part just to annoy him because he would ignore her to keep playing the computer game. "I do keep reading the most bizarre things about myself in the media and that story is just one of them," she laughed. "It is true that Jonny played the game non-stop and I ended up hating Lara because she was the one keeping him up all night and not me! But getting revenge on Jonny certainly wasn't the reason why I took the role. The children of my second husband (Billy Bob Thornton, whom she met on PUSHING TEN) play the game too and I have tried to beat them at it but I kill Lara constantly."

No danger of that happening in the TOMB RAIDER plot written by director Simon West, Patrick Massett, and John Zeman, involving a secret organization, called the Illuminati, who are searching





"I like to hide behind the characters I play. Despite the public perception, I am a very private person who has a hard time with the fame thing."



When composing herself to Lara Croft, Jolie stated, "I'm more athletic than curvy, in control rather than out." Right: Making her peace with actor Daniel Craig.

for an ancient clock that is the key to opening both time and space. With the clock as their guide, the Illuminati must find two halves of a mystical triangle which, if combined, will stop time, bring their evil ancestors back to life, and change the fate of mankind forever. When Lara finds the clock hidden in Croft Manor—her late father Lord Croft acquired the priceless icon during one of his many archaeological digs—it sets her on the most dangerous quest of her exploring career.

Six months of principal photography began on **TOMB RAIDER** July 31, 2000, at London's Pinewood Studios on stunningly elaborate sets designed by Kirk (MYSTERY MEN) Petrucci and continued on location in Hófn, Iceland and in the 12th-century temples at Angkor Wat, Cambodia. Starring alongside Jolie in **TOMB RAIDER** are Liam

Glen (**GORILLAS IN THE MIST**), Daniel Craig (**ELIZABETH**), Noah Taylor (**ALMOST FAMOUS**), Chris Barrie (**Red Dwarf**), Justin Rhoad-Tutt (**THE MADNESS OF KING GEORGE**), Leslie Phillips, Richard Johnson, and her own father Jen Voight as Lord Croft.

Playing the quintessential video game pin-up was a major challenge for Jolie and she feels making her human has been her biggest contribution to the movie version of the game. "My Lara has still got what makes her a cyber icon," said Jolie, "but I'm more athletic rather than curvy, in control rather than cute. She's built in a certain way and I've adjusted that to make her stronger both physically and mentally. I think of Lara as a tomboy who accents her feminine side without even realizing it. The one quality I like about her above everything else is that there's a certain strength in being a

woman and she enjoys that without submerging it in misplaced bravado. She faces incredible dangers yet she's never overwhelmed by any of them. And that, to me, is what's different between Lara and any other action hero or heroine you can name. I picture Lara as a cross between Sigourney Weaver in **ALIEN** and **CROCODILE DUNDEE**."

To play Lara Croft, Jolie knew she would have to learn a British accent and she re-

deed) with in the course of the **TOMB RAIDER** action. From bathing a hulking android programmed with a CD-ROM mix of her favorite clashes to balancing on a descending log in the Tomb of the Dancing Light as it swings towards a huge boshy-trapped Buddha idol, the stunts were both complex and exhausting. She said, "I wanted to do as many of my own as possible and stunt coordinator Simon Crane really put me through my paces with his fitness



marked, "That still makes me nervous as I won't know if I've totally succeeded until the film is released. I wanted Lara to sound like she had been raised with a certain breeding as Lady Croft, but I didn't want her to become an unapproachable and snobby aristocrat. I had to take pieces of that upper-class accent and make it more friendly and winning. Lara is a perfect lady but that comes with a violent edge, thanks to her lifestyle. It was a fine balance and observing my British co-stars speaking was an enormous help."

But that hardship was nothing compared to all the stunt work Angelina had to

regime. For three months prior to shooting, Jolie gym-trained, worked out, ran for miles, rode bikes and cars, hit punch bags, went canoeing, and aerobically every other day. I was also put on a high protein diet of sirloins and meat to ensure maximum energy. Simon Crane was a brilliant teacher because every action sequence was designed in exact relation to what I had trained for. He's the hottest stunt person I've ever met and, because he knew I'd try anything once, we achieved amazing results."

Nor had Jolie any real experience of the rigors of blockbuster special effects work. One of her major se-

quences in this area involved battling reanimated stone monkey warriors and six-armed swordsmen in the Tomb of the Dancing Light. She commented, "You never get used to the fact that you're fighting a flying monkey, whether it's real or will be added later. I was truly shocked by the ugly, mean look of the monkeys because I had pictured them like the ones in *THE WIZARD OF OZ*! Yet facing such weirdness is part of Lara's appeal.

ally was panic-stricken."

Director Simon West may have only wanted Jolie as Lara Croft, but she didn't commit to the project until she had actually met him and sounded him out. She explained, "I initially thought the whole idea of Simon wanting me was a strange one. What had he seen in my past work that convinced him I was Lara? Since it represented a quantum leap into a whole new genre, I had to make sure I felt comfortable

However, there were downsides to *TOMB RAIDER* that were uppermost in Jolie's mind. "I wasn't sure I wanted someone snapping photos of me from all angles while I was in the middle of doing a complicated acting scene just so Lara's sunglasses would conform to the franchise toy designs," said Jolie. "I became an actress because I like to hide behind the characters I play. Despite the public's perception, I am a very private person who has a hard time with the fame thing. Did I really want to star in a massive blockbuster that was going to up my profile like never before? Would *TOMB RAIDER* make it difficult for producers to approach me with other offers after making such a different film from my norm?"

She continued, "The opposite side to that was having some game players visit the set and see how thrilled they were at everything they saw

being done with their favorite character. They lived in Lara's world too and I was overjoyed to be able to answer all their questions while autographing their posters. That's what turned my whole attitude around. I was the person these fans adored. It's my job as an actor to try and successfully become someone else and I'd achieved that with these visitors. Suddenly I felt good about what I was doing and all the nagging doubts about signing a two-sequel contract, having my face on the side of buses, and inspiring action figures vanished.

Amongst Jolie's roster of co-stars is her own father, Jon Voight, who appears throughout Lara's quest in monochrome flashbacks offering advice, clues, and support. She said, "When I read all about Lara's special closeness to Lord Croft, I got really emotional because it reminded me so much of my own relationship with Jon.

To really be Lara Croft, Jolie learned how to speak with a British accent, learned hard as a gymnast, and was put on an energy diet of sunbites and meat for 3 months.



It's almost like she looks at the audience, intimates she doesn't quite believe it either, but gets on with the job of fighting whatever because that's what she does. When explosions go off, they really do and that's quite hard to deal with when you're surrounded by them. But it was the bungee ballet that proved the scariest effect of all from Jolie's point of view. In this sequence, she battles Illuminati henchmen in the Croft Manor hall while bouncing off the walls and ceiling. She said, "At one point I was hanging off a wall and nearly dropped 40 feet to the floor. The look of terror you see on my face is authentic, as I re-

with Simon, that he was the right director to guide my performance. We met, he told me exactly how he saw Lara, explained all about the magical elements, based on real myths, legends, and cultures, he brought into the film, why he wanted them there, and he fed my imagination with ideas that went so far beyond anything I had conjured up myself. It amazed me that his two prior films (*CON AIR* and *THE GENERAL'S DAUGHTER*) had such a masculine slant, since I could see he was a director who really understood women. Once he described Lara as a warrior in a macho world, I was completely sold."







It wasn't until after a meeting with director Sitruce that Jon agreed to play Lara Croft. "I instantly thought the whole idea of Wilson wanting me was a strange one. What had he seen in my past work that convinced him I was Lara?"

He was such perfect casting that it was a bit scary. At first, I wasn't sure if he was the right choice but it soon became obvious that I wasn't going to feel right about anybody else doing it. I have always loved sharing everything about my personal feelings in a script context and to suddenly explore something private about our own relationship was very special. The first scene we did together I don't think I've ever been so still in one particular moment. We were looking deep into each others eyes and the words we spoke rang with a magical honesty. Sometimes you never get the chance to tell people in your life how much you care about them. We really made a point of saying what we have always wanted to say to each other personally within the milieu of the film and it was so special."

She continued, "Both characters share our own personal loves, ideas, and a sense of adventure. Lara is curious about life, the past, and her relationship with her father. Although she has

the independence to figure things out for herself, her father is always there with little messages to point her in the right direction. Jon has always shared his wisdom with me, what life lessons he has learned along the way, and constantly guided me. I've always admired him and felt I was a lot like him. I'm very proud of that and pleased we could both put those feelings across in TOMB RAIDER. How often does a script come along offering such a unique opportunity and one mirroring our own thoughts and feelings? Rarely, and that's why we just had to do it."

Another fantastic experience for Jon was shooting on location in Cambodia in the fabled temples at Angkor Wat, that provided the exterior for the Tomb of the Dancing Light. She enthused, "Cambodia is the most amazing place I've ever been to and I can honestly say that it changed my life and made me feel differently about everything, my life, and my work. For one scene I was under this beautiful wa-



terfall with the most incredible jungle around me and I was overwhelmed to the point where I couldn't speak. For months we had all been making this movie together at a frantic pace, running and jumping around. Suddenly we got to Angkor Wat and everyone in the crew seemed to quiet down, get really happy, calm, and friendly. The country does seem to have a magical quality that caused us all to bend together in a way we hadn't before. I don't think anyone in the crew who went to Cambodia will ever forget it."

She added, "I hope audiences leave TOMB RAIDER wanting to explore other places in the world. It has made me excited about the sights I haven't yet seen and the places I must get around to going to. Life can be really

mundane and we all get wrapped up in the small details that don't matter much in the overall scheme of things. Go out, get on a plane and go somewhere you've never been before. Go backpacking and meet people from different cultures. We all forget that sometimes, and it's important not to do so. Deciding to star in TOMB RAIDER was along similar lines for me as I took a chance and I don't regret it. I don't care what people are going to say about me as an actress after TOMB RAIDER. I know how hard and exhausting it was for me to make Lara Croft a great role model, but all the audience has to do is sit back, have fun and enjoy her thrilling adventures. So go out and have your own too."

—THE TOUR—



# TOMB RAIDER

Nell McAndrew

On playing Lara Croft for a world tour promoting one of the hottest-selling computer games in history.

by Tim Greaves

Born in Leeds, England, when Tracey McAndrew left school at the age of 16 to work in a bank, little could she have known what the next decade held in store for her. By the time she reached 26, and having changed her name to Nell along the way, not only had she become the Internet's sexiest cyber "E-Jay," co-hosted one of Britain's most popular TV gameshows alongside boxing legend Frank Bruno, and posed for *Playboy* magazine, she'd also spent a year touring the world in the guise of a lithe-some character from a computer game.

One day in 1998, she was called to a casting session to find the flesh and blood embodiment of TOMB RAIDER's Lara Croft.

"All I had was a file which had pictures of different poses that the character would generally be seen in," she remembers. "Once you're in the kit and you've got the wig on, and these gun-holsters on your hips, and big biker boots, you feel really strong and mean. It's like when you're a kid and you dress up



After posing as Lara Croft, beautiful Nell McAndrew posed on the pages of *Playboy* in August of 1999.

and pretend you're really tough."

Chosen from over 50 competitors, although various girls had stepped into Croft's desert boots for one-off appearances and promotions, an elated McAndrew was actually the second model to take on the role for a long-term basis.

"They started off with a girl called Rhona Mitra, who did it for a year, and then they moved on to me. And since me, they've had another girl. They change the person behind it so the character stays the most important thing. I knew that was the deal when I started it. But to be honest with you, a year dressing up in a rubber costume and a wig is definitely enough!"

"Anyway, I was promoting the TOMB RAIDER III game, so I was lucky because we did a world tour. They hadn't done that before and they probably won't do it again. We went to Nashville and Atlanta. Then there was Australia, Spain, and Italy."

Wiggling her perfectly

formed 34D-26-36 frame into the slinky Lara Croft outfit, McAndrew had no idea of what a furor she was about to instigate.

"A lot of the fans were completely obsessed with the character. They spend hours and hours playing this game. No wonder their girlfriends aren't happy; I wouldn't be!

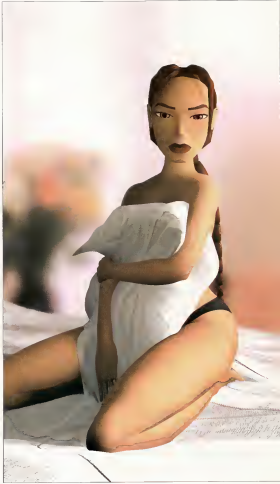
"The way she looks is definitely one attraction. I mean, they make her boobs bigger every time a game comes out. But apart from that, I think it's the fact that when fans are playing the game they're in control of this gorgeous woman that they really fancy. And they can make her do all these different things like backflip or dumb or swim. And she's a really strong, independent character, so she suits a lot of different people for lots of different reasons.

"Incidentally," she adds, "I'm not as acrobatic as Lara. I can't do backflips. I just used to run on and throw a few kicks, or jump on a table and hold the guns up and pose."

**A**n inability to backflips aside, McAndrew undeniably has the beauty and the body to fill Lara Croft's rubber T-Shirt. But has she got anything else in common with the character?

"I think that I'm a really independent, strong-willed person," she says. "Apart from that, I'm athletic. I'm always in the gym and I've done quite a bit of boxing training. In the past, because I've done a lot of underwear modeling, many of my agents used to say, 'Don't train too much or you'll get really muscular and the clients won't like it.' But when I was doing the Lara Croft job it was fantastic because I could train to my heart's content, and no-one would say anything."

What would McAndrew's reaction have been had she been offered the role in the upcoming screen chronicles of Lara's exploits? Daft question really. "Oh, it'd have been fantastic!" she chirps. "Just to get the experience, but the best part would have been to have a personal trainer and be taught martial arts. I would have loved that challenge." □



# TOMB RAIDER SPECIAL

## Roxanne Michaels

by Mike Watt



With all the talk of the eagerly-anticipated *TOMB RAIDER* movie, it would be a grievous crime to not mention the upcoming *Tomb Raider Special* coming out this summer by Top Cow Comics. What makes the *Special* special, what makes it stand out from the monthly series put out by Top Cow? Well to start, it will be a fully-painted issue, a la *Heavy Metal*, courtesy of one of the top comic artists, Joe Jusko.

But with all the hullabaloo about Angelina Jolie, the nice thing about the *Tomb Raider Special* is that it will have a place not only in the hearts of Lara Croft fans, but will mean something to fans of B-movies as well, because the model for Lara Croft in this particular issue is none other than B-movie star Roxanne Michaels (*STUMPED*, *TITANIC* 2000). Michaels was Jusko's first



and only choice to model for the famous character, requiring three days of posing in the artist's Pittsburgh studio. "It's a pretty long process, doing reference photos," says Michaels. "[But] it's tremendous fun. I get to play a superhero—a comic book character. I love the whole character, even though I don't play video games. The strong female protagonist, like a female Indiana Jones, with all the sex appeal that any horny son-a-guy can go nuts for. It's a fun thing to do and Jusko's one of my favorite artists to model for."

This isn't Michaels's first gig as Croft either, as she and Jusko have a history together. "I met Joe at a comic book show and gave him a package of my photos, which also included artwork with some of the other artists I'd worked with. [At the time] I'd only modeled for so many artists in the fantasy/comic book/pin-up world. And when he got his first *Tomb Raider* cover—which was issue #6—he said to me, 'Do you want to pose for this?' I was totally flattered and of course said 'YES!'"

"Modeling for artists happened by accident. I went to my first comic book convention in Pittsburgh about two years ago, and I met artists like Dorien Cleveland and Dave Neutler, and all of a sudden, three or four months later I'm posing for them, and for other major artists," says Michaels, with a slight tinge of bewilderment in her voice. "And after a while you become known as a reliable model, because you know what they need as far as reference. I never can say 'no' to these artists; it's one of the biggest compliments in the world that they want to immortalize you in a painting. I hope I can keep modeling with them—until things start sagging. Whatever's fun, you know? One day I'm Lara Croft, the next day I'm this devil girl, the next day I'm the devil's girlfriend kicking someone's ass."

Look for the *Tomb Raider Special* comic in stores this summer.





"(Lara Croft) is the strong female protagonist, like a female Indiana Jones, with all the sex appeal that any horny sci-fi guy can go nuts for."



# TOMB RAIDER THE GAME

## Lara Croft

This lethal femme is emerging from the virtual 3-D world of video games and into the mainstream.

by Scott Pierce

Much has changed in the world where six months can mean a light year's worth of difference in the pulse-pounding technological age. In the medium of "entertainment," nothing is hotter than video games. Since the creation of the femme fatale in 1940's film noir cinema, this lady gives all new meaning to the word lethal. Her name is Lara Croft.

Tomb Raider, combined video games volumes I-IV, has sold over 21 million copies to date and all incarnations still remain constant sellers in the video-game market. Lara Croft is essentially lightning in a bottle or, more appropriately, a genie in a bottle with endless wishes. With this kind of success, she has appeared in many media ventures, yet retains the mystery of a well-kept secret.

Appearing in comic books and music videos, accompanying U2 on tour, adorn-



Virtual reality Lara Croft and her friend Hawk kick butt. Indiana Jones styled

ing many walls like a Playboy model, forming an entire line of action figures, Lara has shot her way through the world of capitalism much like in the game, con-

quering one level at a time. And she is soon becoming immortal on the silver screen.

Tomb Raider was conceived in 1988 in the town of Derby, England, by Core Design Limited. Core focused on the design and creation of games while letting other companies focus on the marketing aspects. Years after their inception, Core still keeps their specialty despite being bought out by Eidos Interactive in 1996, the year the world first fell in love with the seduction, wit, and strength of Lara Croft in the Tomb Raider game.

Before there even glared a twinkle in Lara's eye, there initially came the game Rick Dangerous in 1989, which featured a male hero not unlike Indiana Jones exploring ruins and temples and kicking butt. This was the first step in the evolution leading to the creation of Lara. The second was the phenome-



As far as fans are concerned, she is a living, breathing embodiment of sensuality and adventure...She is more real than the people who created her.

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cess of  
Sony's  
PlayStation,  
released in  
1994. The

third  
was the lack  
of a game  
with the main  
focus of a female heroine

Before Lara became the Lara Croft recognizable around the world today, the look of Lara was inspired by the comic book character Tank Girl and the English singer Nene Cherry. To look at her today, it's impossible to point to these origins, because she has become her own separate icon with a unique air of inspiration. One can see the influence of Tomb Raider in many things like the Tia Carrere television show *RELIC HUNTERS*.

The first comic to feature Lara Croft teamed her up with another femme fatale—Witchblade. Michael Turner, acclaimed artist who introduced Witchblade for Top Cow and Image Comics, brought the two together and followed it up with an encore one-shot sometime later. The two one-shots were instant sell-out successes with the inevitability of an ongoing series imminent. Then came the Tomb Raider series written by Dan Jurgens and penciled by Andy Park.

Capturing the look of Lara and feel of the video game perfectly, Park began in the comics industry in 1985 through

Matt Hawkins at Extreme Studios. He later began working for Top Cow, which led to drawing *Tomb Raider: Capturing* a video game character is no easy task.

Mixed with reference and ingenuity, Park tackled the video vixen. "Definitely, in the beginning," he says, "I have a lot of books on Lara Croft from the actual video game of what she looks like and added how I would draw it. A lot of it is just out of my head on how I draw females." All these combined with reference from magazines and other comic books flavor his visual style.

Only until recently does Park feel Lara Croft has developed more

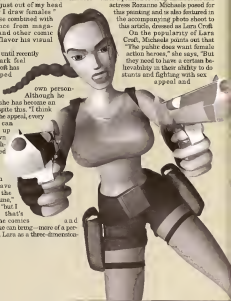
of her own personality. Although he thinks she has become an icon despite this, "I think that is the appeal, every guy can make up their own personality based on the little information they gave us in the video game," he says, "but I think that's what the comics and the movie can bring—more of a personality, Lara as a three-dimension-

al character, not just an ideal."

Will there be a slight change in the look of Lara in the comic now that Angelina Jolie is playing her? "I haven't put much thought into that," Park says, "But I'm sure once I start seeing pictures of what she looks like in *TOMB RAIDER*, that will influence me." He concludes, "For the most part it stays the same."

The other artist to work on *Tomb Raider*, providing alternate covers, is Joe Jusko. Issues six of the comic book feature a painted cover by him. Model and actress Rozanne Michaels posed for this painting and is also featured in the accompanying photo shoot to this article, dressed as Lara Croft.

On the popularity of Lara Croft, Michaels points out that "The public does want female action heroes," she says, "But they need to have a certain believability in their ability to do stunts and fighting with sex appeal and





a coolness to her character." She further exemplifies this by saying, "Look at the public's reaction to Carrie Ann Moss in **THE MATRIX** and Michelle Yeoh in **TOMORROW NEVER DIES**. They want strong female protagonists." She continues, "I am not sure they are ready for these women to hold movies as their own, but they most definitely should be sidekicks, partners, and included in the mass action/martial arts market."

Lara Croft has emerged from the virtual three-dimensional world of video games into the mainstream consciousness. As far as fans are concerned, she is a living, breathing embodiment of sensuality and adventure. She is more real than the people who created her. Like an experiment out of pixels and code, Lara Croft enjoys popularity rarely matched in today's society. This can be both illuminating in a positive way as well as creating possible negative elements. Michaels offers her opinion, "On the negative side, her proportions are unrealistic and her flawlessness can bring false hope to young girls seeking physical perfection." Yet conversely she says, "on the other hand, she has become the paradigm of a strong female protagonist that is neither weak minded or physically feeble." With about 25% of all Tomb Raider products purchased by her female audience, it's obvious that the positive outweighs the negative.

You know Tomb Raider has had quite an impact on the culture when social commentary author Douglas Coupland wants to write a book on Lara Croft. Coupland rose to notoriety with his novel *Generation X* and since went on to pen *Microserfs*,

*Girlfriend in a Coma*, and *Polaroids from the Dead*. Known for his keen sense in quantifying our society today, Coupland, who is a fan of Tomb Raider, wrote a book examining the media during that Lara Croft has become in *Lara's Book: The Phenomenon of Tomb Raider*.

What would be the fate of Tomb Raider if a different path had been chosen for it?

According to public relations manager, Greg Rizzer, of the Kidco Interactive arm in California, Tomb Raider was originally going to feature a male hero. Surely, video gamephiles appreciate that they came to their creative senses and decided to make her female or Lara Croft would have never been born.

"It's considered to be one of the most influential video games of video game history, without a doubt," says Rizzer.

As far as Lara as an icon, "There's definitely two different schools of

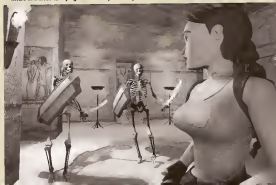
thought," says Rizzer. "One would be the fact that she is considered a sex symbol. The other would be that she represents a strong woman in a video game."

"We have tons of fan mail from woman gamers and they just love playing Lara Croft," Rizzer says. "Traditionally, most women into video games would play puzzle games and strategy games like that," he notes. "She was definitely a cross-over for females to get into the more aggressive stuff," notes Rizzer. "There are different genres of games, if it's a good game then it is a good game," says Rizzer. "You shouldn't be pigeon-holed into thinking you should only play one type of game."

"At a young age girls are given dolls and guys are given guns," notes Rizzer. "You can take a whole lifetime of trying to break down those barriers."

With Lara Croft as our guide, the Tomb Raider takes the chance of exposing more than just entertainment. The world seems ready for it, are you? □

Never one to fear danger, the ever-adventurous Lara Croft explores the interactive tombs of Egypt, where she faces terrifying evil from beyond the grave—armed with every weapon imaginable.







# AMERICAN NIGHTMARE

Writer/director John Keeyes  
delivers a character-driven  
film about a serial killer  
who is the embodiment  
of rage and violence  
...and it's a woman!

by Mike Wall



The cast hangs out at the Delmont & Belhaven, an actual coffeehouse in Fort Worth, Texas, that was used as a primary set for the movie.

It's five a.m., and the cast of **AMERICAN NIGHTMARE** is tired. The crew is tired. Numerous extras fill the many rooms of the privately-owned home being used as that evening's set. Virtually everyone in the house, sweltering under the hot lights and natural Texas weather, has been working for over 12 hours. It's a long scene, and the end is barely in sight. Director Jen Koyes, giddy grin plastered on his face, calls for "action." As the camera dollies back, past a pair of extras, actors Heather Hauxe and Robert McCollum meet in the middle of the narrow hallway, just as star Debbie Rochon

and as Koyes yells cut, the room explodes into laughter. "Oh my god, I'm losing my mind!" Rochon howls, leaning on her co-stars as she dissolves into giggling herself.

"What did you hear?" Koyes asks her, laughing himself.

"Like, breathing, or whispering or..."

"Oh, no," says Hauxe. "Not the voices! Not again!"

The laughter comes again and the exhausted tension drains away. Koyes's grin widens, and lets everyone take a desperately-needed moment to wallow in their insanity. Many of the cast and crew, while not first-timers, are not professionals either. But you couldn't tell that from watching them work. For the past two weeks, many of them have been working grueling 10, 12, even 15-hour days. And there's another week to go before the production can think about wrapping. There have been complaints, but not a single person has left the crew. Everyone is in for the long haul.

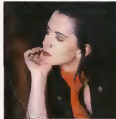
Starring a cast of Texas actors and actresses (save Rochon, of course), **AMERICAN NIGHTMARE** is a fresh take on an old idea: on Halloween night, seven young friends call a pirate radio show and reveal their deepest fears, unaware that a psychopathic killer is also listening to their confessions and will spend the rest of the night ensuring that their nightmares come true. What makes **AMERICAN NIGHTMARE** stand out from the current spate of regurgitated slasher films is its approach to the story and themes, relying on a character-driven story rather than gratuitous violence

or excessive gore (indeed there is hardly a drop of on-screen blood throughout the entire film). Another aspect that makes this film unique is its abundance of strong female characters. Both the hero and the villain of the film are women, played by Brandy Little and Debbie Rochon, respectively, and both characters are three-dimensional, complex characters, rather than the typical cardboard cut-outs of your average shocker. As Jessie McClain, Brandy Little bears much of the burden of serving as the film's emotional center. And as Jane Tappan, B-movie diva Rochon is the embodi-



Director Jen Koyes held at work.

rounds the corner. The trio hit their marks and begin the somewhat complicated sequence of lines. Rochon stops abruptly in mid-sentence and laughs. "What the fuck was that?" she demands,



Debbie Rochon takes a break during rehearsal.

ment of rage and violence, an unstoppable and unknowable force that rips apart the lives of all seven friends, as well as many of those around them.

In many ways, to have two women in





leading roles in a genre film could be considered groundbreaking, until you consider that much of the rest of the cast is rounded out with equally strong female supporting characters. Cindy, played by actress and improv comedienne Kristin McCollum, is not defined as "Tony's Wife," nor is Rebecca Stacey's character of Misty merely "Timothy's Sister." In the film, each of these women have an integral place. To remove a single character, male or female, would interrupt the balance of characters that Roach worked so hard to create. While it is usually true that female characters are usually per-



↑ Rebecca Stacey (also on page 26) plays "Misty."  
 ↓ Heather Hance as "Marianne" won't be waiting for long.  
 H. Randy Little ("Jessica") seems confident she'll survive.



ceived as set dressing or an object of male desire, the same cannot be said of the women in *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*.

"Jon made it very clear [Jane Toppan] is not a femme fatale, and that's what turned me on to this character," says Roach. "She's absolutely not a superficial

female killer that you don't really buy, but the film is super-sexy, so you put up with her [*AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*] is not even close to that. Plus it was such a challenge to play a female serial killer, a role I've always wanted to do."

A veteran of such independent and low-budget fare as *TROMEO AND JULIET*, *ABDUCTED II*, and *TERROR FIRMER*, Roach is no stranger to horror. However, this is one of the first films that hinges on her performance. Suspense films are usually made or broken by the strength of their villains, and this is certainly true of *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*. As a student at such prestigious actors' studios as the famed Lee Strasberg Institute, Roach jumped feet-first into the role. She immersed herself in the world of murderous Jane Toppan to such an extent that she refused to associate

with the other actors while on the set. She made her presence known, though.

"We'd be sitting there in a group," says Becky Stacey, "or Brandy [Little] and I would be sitting on a couch and [Debbie] would just stare at you, very uncomfortably, from across the room, completely separated from us, until you were just going 'Euuuuuuh!' Then she'd pull her head back into the shadows. When we were doing photo shoots, she would just come and stare at us, not saying a word. And when she'd walk, by she'd brush us very harshly. It was funny—well, not funny, scary—to see her walking around



in character. One day she walked in when Heather [Hance] and I were getting our makeup done, and she mutters under her breath, 'There go those two little bitches now. I think there's going to be two less bitches by the end of this.' Whoa! Thank you!"

[Left to right] Michael Scott, Kimberly Mergen, Jessica Reed, and Bill Sebastian are completely unaware a serial killer is watching.



"Females have the same capacity for violence," said Keeyes. "yet we don't want to look at the 'nurturing, child-bearing sex' as being capable of this level of violence."

Heather Hance confirms the stories of psychic terrorism. "[Debbie] scared us! Brandy's really scared, because Debbie's been laying it on her, staying in character. It works for me, because I don't know her in this movie. I interact with her in the party scene, but that's it. [My character is] actually apprehensive of her—which really works in the scene because I am apprehensive."

And what does Brandy Little, the apparent focus of the actress's animosity, have to say about her co-star? "She's so great. Debbie is wonderful as Jane." But then Brandy pauses. "She's given me lots of little gifts, behind-the-scenes and on-camera. She's got some amazing capabilities. Wonderful, wonderful eyes. Amazing energy. When I say 'gifts,' I mean she's given me some wonderful emotional stuff to play off of. Additional things to take with me to deepen the whole character interaction."

Rochon got so into her role that her co-stars quickly referred to her

she'd been asleep behind us. All of a sudden, I could feel someone staring at me. And when I turned, she was peeking around a box with this look that pierced me and flipped my stomach; I couldn't look at her the rest of the time! I said to myself, 'Okay, absorb that feeling, because that's Jane over there totally messing with you.' And I literally reveled in the rest of the time allowing Jesse to be frightened by her. I hope she picked up on the discomfort that she's created in me—that it powers her up. And now I have this place from which to explode when I finally confront her."

Which brings us to the lady herself. Meet know Rochon to be personable, friendly, funny. So is it really true that the usually happy actress tormented her co-stars in such a way? "Oh yeah! Totally destroyed them, one way or another. If not physically, then emotionally I had a

ally cranked state, but it was still me. I don't want to say I didn't have a problem, but it was in a way enjoyable for me to go there. But sometimes it would definitely get to me. People would say very nice things to me, and it's almost like I couldn't let that affect me. I felt it was very much my job not to connect. It is weird to say it felt good, because it was a very harsh part of myself to live in, but it felt good as an actor. When I walked away, it



as "Jane," a nickname that continued throughout filming—though few had the guts to call her this while she was in the room. After a while, it almost stopped being a nickname. "I first met her as Debbie," Little continues. "We met in a rehearsal and she was a very sweet person. She's very funny. Then I met Jane. And I try to avoid her. Because the first time I saw Jane outside of rehearsal, we were all sitting in the coffeehouse [between scenes in Fort Worth, Texas, which served as a primary set in the film], and



QUARREL McCallum ("Cypher") talks with (clockwise from top left) Brandy Little ("Jane"), and Johnny Sneed ("Wayne") and (bottom) Rebecca Stacey ("Mia"). Who is the real killer?

great time." She does, however, deny any perceived favoritism towards Little. "I didn't necessarily target her but, as an actress, she made the choice to use it the most. And because she did, it was intensified."

Debbie's trademark enthusiasm seems also to signal that Jane was, if not gone, then at least returned to the dark place within Debbie from where she was born. Looking at Rochon, you find it hard to believe that such a rage-filled terrorist could exist. "You can do a lot of reading on a person or type of person. It's interesting and it's helpful. But we all have every type of person inside us. Some people like to treat their role like it is a very different person than themselves. And certainly we wouldn't go around doing what our characters do. But [to play Jane] I had to find a certain part to tap into, and when I was performing, I was in that re-



took me a few days to let go and get back to myself. But any time I use myself to that degree, that's the high that I like." Debbie smiles, shrugs. "In that sense it was great." There is a sexism that is rampant throughout Hollywood, which also trickles down into the independent film industry. While it would be reaching to say that AMERICAN NIGHTMARE explodes certain misconceptions behind this sexism, it does belie certain perceived "truths"—such as the conceit that women are victimized because males are the primary audience for horror movies.

"I love horror movies. I'm obsessed with them," says Krstin McCallum with a laugh. "When I got the part, I was just so excited to finally be in one. What's really bad, though, is that I'll watch horror movies all home, and my eyes are closed half the time, and [my husband Robert] will be stuck watching them, while I'm saying, 'Can I look? Can I look?'"

And what is McCallum's favorite horror movie? "CHOPPING MALL. It's so hokey, I love it. I did a paper in college on the feminist movement in Hollywood. Because basically, when the horror film started to pick up again, the feminist movement started in full swing. Because the men could attack women running around in their underwear, and the perspective was always on the killer. And it



Debbie Rochon ("Jane Toppan") embracing a scene with Kenyon Holmes, who plays Bruce in the movie.

was the men's revenge for the women burning their bras and getting all that. And *CHOPPING MALL* was proto-typical of that, because you have the women running around the mall in their underwear—where else can you have an attack but in a mall? Death and consumerism!"

The sexism continues to trickle down, however, and generally manifests itself in the old-time argument over the state of interesting female roles available to both mainstream and independent actresses. There always seems to be an over-abundance of "the housewife/girl-friend/mother" roles in films, allowing the male characters to take center stage. Some say that attitude is changing, that we will see more "Lara Croft," more "Clarice Starlings." Others say that good female roles are few and far between. It's

a timeless debate, of course.

"I do not believe there is a lack of good female roles, regardless of it being in Hollywood or independent films," says Little. "There remains a constant recirculation of life being pumped through the veins of our industry by new ideas and fresh perspectives. Good roles, both male and female, are a thriving by-product of this process."

**T**hen there's McCollum's take on the argument. "My gut reaction was to say there are plenty of roles for women. But then I decided to look back at the last three movies I went to. First—*CHARLIE'S ANGELS*—in my opinion that was chock-full of great female roles and the fact that Drew Barrymore had a huge role in the making of

the movie, it was incredibly frustrating to watch that movie—and I've argued with people who have said that Altman made the choice to make people frustrated—but I don't buy it. I think it emphasizes that there are still movies being made by people who really don't understand women. So yes, there is a definite lack of good roles. It's changing, slowly, but no, there's still not parity."

Though the debate might be on-going, the fact that *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* has more than its share of female characters is already an established fact. That had to be one of the major attractions of the script, regardless of the actress's individual stance on the "eternal debate."

"The idea of a female killer definitely intrigued me," says McCollum. "The majority of horror films have male killers (some would even say as a response to the feminist movement)—so the idea of having the killer be a strong female was fascinating. And the one thing I really liked was that at no point during the movie did any of the characters say, 'Wow, must be her time of the month,' or something similar that would have put her in the female stereotype box. Her character was respected throughout the film as a person, which I thought was very cool and proactive."

"The male characters really are wusses, aren't they?" says Becky Stacey with a laugh. "I really do hope that it says something to the people making films. It doesn't have to be so male-oriented, dammit. Especially Debbie's character. And plus, the women aren't victimized in the sense of being sexually

On location in Texas with (l-r) Veronique Stevenson (production coordinator), Johnny Sneed, Rebecca Stacey, Jan Kenyon (director), and Randy Little



"I hope that the character is as engaging on film as it was for me to play," said Rochon. "And if it is, that is payback enough for me."

abused. Unlike the *FRIDAY THE 13TH* movies, [where] people are having sex and they get a spear through them. There's more going on [in this movie] than that kind of thing."

"I had no idea how strong a role I had until after I had been cast," Little says. "I was blessed with incredible writing and a director who chose to empower the female characters in the script. I feel fortunate to have been entrusted with a role of such depth and magnitude. The overall story is not only tight, it's adventurous. It's not just, there's a killer who kills via this method throughout the whole movie; [Jane Tappan's methods] are customized to fit each person, which is even more disturbing. And I'm excited about the psychological thriller aspect of it, as opposed to it being a horror-slasher flick. I enjoyed the fact that it [was written] for an intelligent audience. I go to the movies and I love seeing the ones that don't spoon-feed me and allow me think for myself and follow along on the adventure with the characters. [Writer/director Jon Keeyes] also allowed for a lot of character development within the story, which is part of the fun. I love working with Jon. He's very giving, very encouraging. They have put together a phenomenal cast and crew. Every single person is so

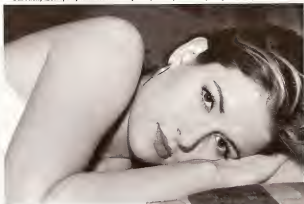
vital to the energy on the set. And I think it's going to make for an interesting film."

Which may be the true conundrum of *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*. For a project that is pro-female, it is almost surprising that it was conceived by a man—though that surprise is definitely born out of reverse-sexism. And while he wouldn't dream of trying to answer our "eternal question," he manages to answer why he made certain decisions. "I consciously decided to keep our two primary characters female because I loved the concept of a female protagonist being forced to deal with a female antagonist. Women deserve much stronger and diverse roles in cinema, but that wasn't my sole reason for doing so. Basically, I found the idea of a female aerial killer unique and terrifying. I think audiences tend to cope better with male killers because of the stereotype towards the violent nature [that men possess]. Females have the same capacity for violence yet we don't want to look at the 'nurturing, child-bearing sex' as being capable of this level of violence. When I was doing research for the movie, I found there are many women killers that are as equally violent and horrific as their male counterparts, but the media tends to downplay these women because of the impact on society.

So, to use a female killer is much more terrifying."

Keeyes also proves himself to be a responsible filmmaker, his finger on the pulse of what the audience wants to see, while giving them something different at the same time. The plot of *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* unwinds quickly, and while focusing on so many women, a little girl does make it into the final cut—this is a B-movie, after all. And while most directors try to justify such scenes as "necessary" and "tasteful," such terms actually do apply in this case. While Rochon has a quick topless scene, so Jane Tappan seduces a potential victim, a second instance actually occurs earlier in the film. A film buff at heart, Keeyes re-creates the look and feel of several classic scenes from some of his favorite horror films, such as *HALLOWEEN* and *THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW*. And in a key scene, he places Becky Stacey right into the heart of the classic *PSYCHO* shower scene. "Jon had promised me that it wouldn't be T&A. It was a little bit of boobage, maybe butt. But they even took out the butt. I don't know why—I worked out! I got it looking good! I don't have a problem with nudity as long as it's tastefully done, and Jon did a good job. Though it was still

Don't worry about spunky Texan actress Stacey Little ("Jessie")—she ends up being the unlikely hero of the film.



weird to sit down and watch the movie with my grandfather. As soon as that scene came on I was, 'Look! Look! Something on the floor right there! Popcorn! Who wants popcorn! Ooops, missed my books, sorry, Grandma.'"

**AMERICAN NIGHTMARE** was the result of a two-year journey for Keesey, who had previously worked as a Hollywood publicist, as well as helming the Texas-based magazine *GC*, which continues to take the bulk of his time. A.N. will mark his debut as a writer/director/producer, without even a short film under his belt to busy this massive undertaking.

On set, Keesey seems tireless. On an independent shoot, the writer/director is the father figure, working much longer hours than the cast and most of the crew (save for the occasional skeleton crew of similarly insane production assistants). By the end of the daily 16-hour shoot, the average actor or grip has been reduced to

top names in the independent horror movie industry. Debbie Rochon and, in a cameo, Beniko Stevens, both of whom are long-time friends of Keesey's. He is both representative and atypical of the independent filmmaker, as his nihilistic determination is the force behind the project, and yet no one acts as if it is a chore. Many crewmembers are working for free, without even the promise of the Monopoly money that comprises "deferred payment."

"Everyone has given one hundred and ten percent," says Keesey. "Not a single person dropped out. I'm truly amazed."

His leading ladies sum up the prevailing attitude towards the man who has somehow mystified everyone with his contagious dream.

"I have worked with a lot of very nice people, people who were super-cool," said Rochon. "I've worked with people who collaborate. But, the weird thing with Jon is that he's always on the same page you are. I will say something to him, regarding the character, or a slight alter-

some way but I was willing to shoot it for you, because I knew that was your favorite of the two endings." And it was, when I read it. It was a very complicated scene, but he was still willing to take a very long night, spend the amount of money and film it would take to shoot that scene—and do it for me, knowing it wouldn't be the one used. That just speaks volumes about the kind of man he is and what kind of director he is."

**AMERICAN NIGHTMARE** wrapped production in early October. Actors and crew members returned to their lives, no longer looking over their shoulder, waiting for an attack by a crazed Debbie Rochon. Currently Keesey is preparing the film for upcoming festivals.

Heather Hesse went back to her secret identity as an attorney. "I'm not evil! I always qualify it and say, 'Yeah, I'm an attorney, but I'm not that kind of attorney!' I only work part time, helping out other lawyers. People at work are fascinated by the filmmaking side of me."

Robert and Kristin McCollum re-



Poor "Melanie" (Heather Hesse) meets her doom. She called co-star Debbie Rochon's ability to frighten her both in and out of character as "psycho-terrific."



something barely resembling a solid form. But Keesey is still bouncing around, still grinning, and calling for everyone to keep their energy up. Oddly enough, few people express a desire to murder him.

"After 12 hours I'm just like, 'I want what he's on!'" says McCollum. She pretty much speaks for the cast.

Heather Hesse nods in agreement. "Jon has been working on this for I don't know how long—a year? A couple of years?—so he really knows what he's doing. I've never seen him get stressed out. I saw him get a little nervous right before we started shooting, but ever since we started he's just been Mr. Calm, Cool, and Collected."

For Keesey, **AMERICAN NIGHTMARE** is a dream come true. Working from his own script, Keesey used both friends and professionals in primary crew roles, and working with two of the

ation in a line, or motivation in a scene, and he will say, 'I was just going to say that,' or 'I was just thinking that.' It was almost like being directed on a psychic plane. I mean that very seriously. But it was as though Jane had a life of her own. And he was just so receptive. If I made a suggestion, any a couple of days before we shot the scene, he would say, 'Oh that sounds great!' And on the day of shooting, we both knew that what he had originally written was better—but he was still open to changing it. The perfect example of this is when we were going to shoot two endings—I'm not going to tell you which one we did or didn't—and the day we were going to shoot the first one, we were going over the script that morning. I turned to him and said, 'Because of the way she's come together, now that we're doing it, this ending is not going to work.' And he just looked at me and said, 'Thank you for saying that. I felt the

turned to their day jobs, performing in their improvisational comedy troupe, Neapolitan Syndicate. (If you're ever in Dallas, they go on every Wednesday Night at the Ososa Bar and Grill on Greenville Avenue.) Their work on **AMERICAN NIGHTMARE** has not yet finished, however, as they are continuing to serve the production by assembling a documentary of the shoot.

Both Little and Stacey leapt right away into other acting jobs. (Says Stacey, "I just came back from Nebraska. Did my first digital video feature—The Book that Made Us. I play the girlfriend of the lead singer of this struggling rock band. I get to be mean and pregnant and scream and hit people. It was a blast!")

Despite returning to record the odd bits of dialogue, all of them seem a trifle nostalgic for the experience.

Kristin McCollum compares the **AMERICAN NIGHTMARE** shoot to the

others in her resume. "One of the other independent films I did, they'd yell, 'Cut' and I'd have to go and be a grip or something. That was seriously low-budget. But this has been great. Jen and his crew had it all together."

While she has several films coming up, as well as the full support of her husband, Kyle, Little looks back at Jesse McClain, the young woman whose skin she inhabited for so long. "It was hard to disengage. I did not track time or how long it took to 'shake it off.' I immersed myself in Jesse and had an absolute blast being her. I guess my 'recovery' falls somewhere between hard transition and a 'light-switch' transition. I definitely miss shooting and I cannot wait for [the movie] to be out there."

As for Debbie Rochon, she returned to New York. Her schedule was already full before she got to the airport, with appearances coming up in *THE TOXIC AVENGER 4: CITIZEN TOXIC*, *TERROR FIRMER*, *HEAD CHEERLEADER*, *DEAD RESURRECTION GAME*, all

films that fall within the horror genre, in one sense or the other. She's a perpetual motion actress, luckier than some, far more persistent and determined than most. She seems the most grounded about the production, due, most likely, to her experience in the industry. Through one can't help but get the feeling that she is avoiding hyping the movie, perhaps out of fear of "jinxing" the experience.

"I hope that the character is as engaging on film as it was for me playing her," she says, sounding quite eager. "And if it is, that is payback enough for me." Rochon is a very thoughtful woman and pauses frequently when she speaks. Finally, the words come as they're chosen.

Rochon gives a "killer" performance in the film.



Psychopath: 'Jesse Topper' (Rochon) contemplates who her next victim might be. Perhaps the next from *PSYCHOPATH*

"This was a very special case. And I would hope that, if anything else, what would come out of this is that people would offer me meatier roles. I think this movie has shown me that I'm ready to tackle bigger roles, do bigger stories. The ultimate goal in a perfect world would be to have my *CLOCKWORK ORANGE*, my *TAXI DRIVER*, a cult hit. To be in something really amazing, really cool, and just have a whooped-out role in it."

her calm words belie one small truth, however, which is that several reviewers, who have heard the buzz and have seen advance screenings of *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*, albeit in its rough-cut form, are of the opinion that this is the Debbie Rochon film. If anyone on the Internet is to be believed, *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* is destined for cult status. (A somewhat silly statement, true, as you can't predict a "cult" film, but the enthusiasm behind these words is what drives the statement.) "I don't know that *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* is weird enough to be a cult hit, but I hope that it's different enough, especially for the atypical female role that I play, that people will say, 'Here's some sample of cool out-there roles

for women. Crazy serial killer or strong, yet crazy, woman roles.' That would be very cool too. I really have a lot of belief in this movie."

I let it go at that.

Fans of any genre follow their favorites closely. The official website for *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* has received thousands of hits since it was first set up in early 2000. After so many years of writing about other people's films, Kaseya has found himself to be the center of attention in numerous interviews, for local papers as well as national magazines. In these pen-*BLAIR WITCH PROJECT* days of media sensation, over-hyping a project can be dangerous. But no one on the *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* team seems to be very worried. They believe in the film.

If nothing else, *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* will show other independent filmmakers that there is more to a film than bare breasts and gallons of blood. That women are more than background scenery while men do all the fun stuff. That suspense is borne out of interesting characters trapped in unthinkable situations. And that not everything in this world can be explained. Or should be.

Interested parties are invited to check out the official *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* webpage at <http://www.american-nightmare.com>.

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**ROCHON**



# could this be THE HARDEST WORKING ACTRESS IN AMERICA?

**N**ow that the actual Millennium has reared its ugly head, B-movie fans around the world will have a tough time keeping up with the many appearances of one of the most popular actresses working in independent films today: Debbie Rochon. In the coming months, she will be seen as a pregnant school teacher (*THE TOXIC AVENGER 4: CITIZEN TOXIE*), the owner of a training camp for lesbian gladiators (*Seduction Cinema's GLADIATOR EROTICUS*), an over-worked actress (*TERROR FIRMER*, Tréma Entertainment again), a mysterious cheerleading coach (Jeff Miller's *HEAD CHEERLEADER, DEAD CHEERLEADER*, due out from Spectrum Films), and an unstoppable psychotic killer (*AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*). Obviously, the B-movie diva likes to stay busy. Taking many acting roles in order to pay the bills, but never giving anything less than her best effort, she has what could be considered a "European" attitude towards acting, though she sees things in different terms.

"It's more that I have a very blue-collar approach," she explains. "I enjoy acting. I love film, and the more I work, the happier I am. I'm not going to do something that I don't like. I will do something that's fun."

That said, there are few actresses, either in B-movies or in the mainstream Hollywood world, that take their craft more seriously than Debbie Rochon. Perhaps her professionalism and determination was borne out of necessity: Growing up homeless and alone on the streets of Vancouver, Canada, Debbie worked odd jobs until she had enough money to take her to New York City, to study acting (the acting "bug", as it were, had bit her at the young age of 11, when she landed a role as a featured extra in the cult film *LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THE FABULOUS STAINS*). Once in New York, Rochon studied at the famed Lee Strasberg Institute and the Michael Chekhov Studio. This single-minded self-reliance, to let nothing stop her from achieving her

dreams, is a testament of the woman's strength and resolve, particularly when one takes into consideration that Rochon's achievements were reached without succumbing to self-pity, anger, or even the common back-stabbing that is rampant throughout an industry populated with those who had undergone far less hardship.

And perhaps it is because of all she has gone through that Debbie brings a concentration to the set that impresses virtually everyone who has worked with her. For her role as the sociopathic Jane Tappan in Jon Kooyes's upcoming *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*, for example, Debbie spent almost a year preparing for the part, studying serial killers, interviewing psychologists, creating a realistic profile for the frightening character. As a result, Jane Tappan may soon be considered by horror fans to be one of the most unique, terrifying, complex, and fascinating film villains, taking an honored place between Hopkins's *Hannibal Lecter* and Peter Lorre's *Hans Beckert*. Advanced word on the film seems to prove that this is no exaggeration. And while Rochon has never stooped to the conniving and backstabbing that is the gist of "tell-all" exposés, "I have only been driven by wanting to express myself in my work. I have also thought that people who do 'bad things' to you will eventually get theirs. Without any help from me. I do my best to live a straight life and try and forgive people. I don't forget, but I try and not let their negativity be a part of my life."

It's been an exciting year for Rochon. After completing what may be her largest role to date in *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*, 2000 also saw her well-publicized role in cult-director Andreas (VIOLENT SHIT) Schnaas's new film *DEMONIUM* fall through at the last moment. And in November, Debbie's popular internet radio talk show on Eyedea.com—which she co-hosted with personality, "The Movie Guy," Tim Reid—was cancelled without warning.

"Eyeda is flake!" she announced over the phone. "Well, not Eyeda itself, but the weekend programming is done. I will still be producing some of

by mike watt

"I can work with people of all different levels of experience, and if the caring is there, I am 110% behind it. (But it's) depressing to work with actors who don't give a shit..."

[Eyzad.com's] entertainment programming during the week, but I won't be on the air. This came completely out of nowhere, but that's the radio business. You literally go to work one day and it's over."

Rochon is a tireless promoter who works very closely with artists and filmmakers even after a project has wrapped. When **TERROR FIRMER** premiered at the American Film Institute in New York City, Rochon was right there with Trueta's president, Lloyd Kaufman, giving speeches and interviews about the insane film-within-a-film. She is also one of the most accessible actresses, spending time with fans at conventions, and making herself available to friends, so was the case for her cameo roles in **THE RESURRECTION GAME** and the wonderfully titled **MULVA: ZOMBIE ASS-KICKER**, directed by New York filmmaker Chris Sewer.

And yet, this is the same woman who can be seen in numerous productions by Seduction Cinema, the company famous for marrying slapstick comedy with soft-core lesbian coupling. While Rochon herself abstains from the naked frolicking, her very presence in the films occasionally gives her fans pause, many wondering why one of their favorite actresses would "deign" to appear in films with titles like **THE EROTIC GHOST**, **GLADIATOR EROTICUS**, **MISTRESS FRANKENSTEIN**, and the newly released **EROTIC SURVIVOR**. She laughs and shrugs off any negative implications. "When the guys at Seduction Cinema make their movies, whether it's Zack [Snygg, writer/director of **IN THE HOOD**], a serious movie that he does every year, or their sexy video stuff—it's the comedy I love doing. That's a blast and I think Zack and John Fedele are hysterical [to work with]. I thoroughly enjoy improvising with those guys. People buy [films by Seduction Cinema] for the really sexy erotic stuff. But my friends and I put forward through the sex. [We] love the stories and the comedy. Plus, look at **THE EROTIC GHOST**—it's really, really good! It's more of a mood piece, though, a statement about a guy who just loses his soul in his day-to-day life. [Director John Bachus] made an experimental film within the context of [a] T&A film! He's bringing up the quality of T&A videos. I mean, if you have to have a T&A video, let's do something creative, or at least try some new things. A lot of people who are buying it strictly for the sex don't want that, of course. But I have to give [the producers] credit. I'm really excited for them."

B-movies have always relied on the winning combination of nudity and violence. While politicians can rage at the gates of Hollywood, demanding better "responsibility" from the studios, the independent film world continues to crank out endless "shower/slasher" films, which thrive on home video and DVD, bringing buckets of money to the producers of such fare. Which would explain the video release of **THE SANDY HOOK**, **LINGERIE BEACH PARTY MASSACRE**. A throwback to the cheap-o grindhouse video fare of the early '80s and directed by someone named "Master Creepo," **SANDY HOOK** features

Delbis as one of almost a dozen young women who frolic in various states of undress before they are hunted down and systematically murdered. Rochon has received unusual amounts of criticism for her appearance in **SANDY HOOK**, from die-hard fans and even close friends, and it may be an indication of her "blue collar" sensibilities letting her down. Rochon sighs at this implication, weary of the issue.

"To me, **SANDY HOOK**, is so goddamned funny. And my friends who know me—who 'got me'—understand where I'm at. The bottom line is, it was a hot to do. I wish it, I laugh my ass off, end of story. If you want to gress me and say, 'Why? Why? Why? Artistically why?' I'll say, when I made the decision to do it, I was [preparing to] fly out to Vegas, to do a movie with Michael Berryman—which was a huge fantasy come true because I'm a huge fan. It was very low budget, so the pay was low, and I was going to be out there for an entire month. I had two months worth of bills and rent to be concerned with. And

getting six, seven hundred bucks a day to do [**SANDY HOOK**] was very helpful for me to go and work with Michael Berryman! I don't feel that I have to explain myself, but that's what happened."

Having started off as projects requiring nudity for no reason other than to have a pretty girl die, Rochon may have since gotten away from those types of roles, but her past remains, indeleble on film, and she makes no apologies, to her fans, friends, or anyone. **THE SANDY HOOK** question, however, seems to touch a nerve. "[There was] one fellow I knew who was really coming down on the nudity roles. And he wanted to do 'the ultimate scream queen movie...' Give the girls in the movie the chance to act, like no one else has ever given them. And then I said, 'Well, is there nudity in your movie?' And he said, 'Well, yes. But it's needed nudity.' There's no doubt in my mind that it's sincere. I'm not dissing the guy. But I don't like people who judge each other. If you don't want to make a certain movie, then don't. If you don't want to watch a certain movie, then don't. But don't sit there and say how much better yours is if you have [nudity] or don't have it. The whole judgmental process goes back to the puritanical society that we live in. It's not a big deal, folks. We're just perpetuating this whole ideal that it's wrong. If someone wants to switch gears and stop doing it, then why harp on the fact that they've done it? My God! Holy cow, stop the press! It's not such a big deal."

What sets Rochon apart from a lot of actors is that she is unafraid. While it is a cliché that "the work is reward enough," the saying is true, at least, in Delbis's case. But more rewarding is the rare project that comes along and captures her imagination, through the strength of writing or the unique quality of the character. Such was the case of **SPLIT**.

Still caught in the financial agony of post-production, **SPLIT** is a futuristic, mind-bender of a movie, the dream/nightmare which sprang whole from the head of New York artist Chaim Benico (*The Pope of Utah*), which tells the



Delbis acted in a string of Trome films, including the classic **TROME & JULIET**.

multi-layered labyrinthine story of a man whose fantasy life bleeds into his reality, though at the outset, the audience is unsure which life is which. It is a surreal and ultraviolent piece, the look of which can be compared to certain films that have come before it, but not to any satisfying result. "It's like *BLADE RUNNER*, in that it looks futuristic, but not really," is the best review-description thus far, which came from an anonymous fan visiting Debbie at a long-ago film convention. *SPLIT* is almost indescribable, and fans wait breathlessly for its release. As a producer, Debbie continues to spread the word, to let people know about it, even though principal photography wrapped in 1999. In *SPLIT*, Rochon is almost unrecognizable. The five-foot-two-inch actress plays a six-foot, mutilated and psychotic hit-person named "Cyclops," and spends the film buried under grotesque makeup. Mention *SPLIT*, and Rochon will be reluctant to talk about anything else.

"In 1995 I met Chaim Biance, and he originally wanted to do another movie called *DRUG ME SHOOT ME*. I was [to be] the female lead in that film. The script just blew my mind! It was like nothing I'd ever read in my life. It was amazing! And in getting to know Chaim, I realized that if anyone could pull this off, he could. So we started meeting with people. I met with as many people as I could come up with. Everybody would pretty much jack us around. They would read the script, be blown away, get really interested, and then when the time came to actually part with the money, it was like asking for their first born. We just couldn't get any actual money out of those people. After a very long time—a solid two years—trying to get money, finally he said, 'You know, I wrote this other script, it will be a lot less expensive to make. It's called *SPLIT*, and I wrote this with a male character [named] Cyclops. But you know what? I really think you could do this.'"

As anyone who has seen stills can attest, Rochon is unrecognizable as Cyclops, her striking trademark features hidden behind gruesome prosthetic scars and dark glasses. "Playing



Cyclops was interesting," she says with an almost-audible smirk. "Both Cyclops and [*AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*'s] Jane Toppin are killers, but they couldn't be more different. [With Jane] killing is a way to express her rage. It's just a job to Cyclops. For every dead body, I get ten grand. Angelica Huston said [that] playing Morton [in *THE ADDAMS FAMILY*] was hard because she had to develop a persona—an essence—but her job was not to show any emotion, or very low emotion. And that was pretty much Cyclops, because anything you could do was too much. It wasn't about doing absolutely nothing—you can't do that in a movie. But it's about doing a very specific nothing. So believe it or not, it's very hard [to convey who she was]."

It's obvious that Rochon's enthusiasm for the character and project are a direct offshoot of her respect for writer/director Biance. "Chaim pretty much shot *SPLIT* with his own money. I just sort of helped him over the years. I had raised a little bit of money. It was a real

labor of love."

That *SPLIT* will see the light of day, Rochon has no doubt, and still feels as strongly about the project now as she did when it was first begun in 1996. "My only concern is that it's been so many years in the making, and films have just been progressing so rapidly, when *SPLIT* finally gets out, will it still be as cutting-edge? Now, I think so, because you can't duplicate what's in his mind. I'm sure that when he's finished tweaking things, it will just be amazing."

September, 2000: Rochon spent three weeks in drought-stricken Fort Worth, Texas, shooting *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*, playing the film's villain, the sociopathic killer Jane Toppin, while first-time director Jon Kasow orchestrated the rest of the multi-character cast and extensive crew. *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* might be Rochon's most important project to date, for Jane is the very heart of the film, the dark, degraded center, preying on the horses, utterly destroying the light.



"A horror movie should be an actor's dream, because you get to be in situations that don't normally happen. Extreme situations that call for extreme emotions."



In **AMERICAN NIGHTMARE**, Keeves crafted the deceptively simplistic story of seven characters who call a pirate radio station on Halloween night to share their innermost fears, unaware that the emotionally-disturbed Toppin is listening nearby, and decides to bring these fears to horrifying life. The rest of the film involves the gradual destruction of seven lives, in which death is proven not to be the worst thing that can happen to a person. Jane Toppin surges through seven people as if they were made of onion skin.

For three weeks, Debbie Rochon didn't just play Jane Toppin, she became her.

"Debbie chose to employ Method acting for this role," explains Keeves. "In order to stay true to the character, she isolated herself from the rest of the cast. She didn't want to interact with anyone until a particular character was finished with his or her screen time. She'd just lurk in the shadows, letting the others know that she was there without really speaking to any of them. Very focused. It heightened the tension that the characters felt onscreen." Keeves pauses for a moment. "It really freaked a few of them out."

This decision seemed a natural one to Rochon. That absorbing herself into her onscreen persona helped her performance is obvious from the dailies. "I might have been able to [turn the performance on and off] but I might not have. The easiest way for me to do the role was to just go into a part of myself and let it affect me. To go to the really messed-up, rage-filled parts of my psyche. And if I was to only let it affect me on-and-off, on-and-off, then I think it would have been a more shallow experience. If you do anything well, it takes a lot of concentration,

Using "method" acting, Rochon became killer "Jane Toppin" in **AMERICAN NIGHTMARE** by remaining out of sight in between scenes.

and I was definitely very concentrated the entire time. And I just hope that within everything, what I was doing will come across on film. If it does, then boy, that would be heaven."

So focused was Rochon that many of the cast members had taken to referring to her when she was not around as "Jane," at first only jokingly, less so as the shoot went on. Many of the cast would often refer to Debbie disappearing into "Jane Mode" both on and off the set, where the usually personable actress would withdraw, her eyes actually darkening. Most of the cast and crew felt that Rochon particularly tormented co-star Brandy Little, who plays Jesse, the focus of Jane's obsessive tortures. Little described times where Rochon would stare unblinkingly at her from dark corners of the set. And it wasn't until the last day of shooting that Rochon and Little actually had a conversation.

"I really had to go into it thinking, 'Well they're either going to understand or they're not,'" Rochon said later. "My job was not to be popular. My job is to do my ultimate best. There were times I felt bad about the degree of anti-social I was in between shooting, in the few hours that I had to sleep and eat and all that. But I hope that people understood. And if they didn't, well, hopefully, they will look at the project that we've all worked so hard on and think that maybe it worked."

To many people, this might seem like bizarre behavior for any actor; something that might be seen in a film parodying Hollywood. To Rochon, acting can be fun, but it isn't something you "just do." While she doesn't demand that every filmmaker take their craft to the same extremes, she does lose patience with those who sleepwalk through their work. "If you're working for a director who's just trying to get something out, it gets very frustrating that you get one take, maybe two, and they just go along with it. They're just 'Okay next' and they don't care if you got it or not. I can



"The easiest way for me to do the role (in *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*), was to go into a part of myself and let it affect me. To go to the really messed-up, rage-filled part of my psyche."

work with people of all different levels of talent and experience, and if the caring is there, I am one hundred percent behind it. (It's) a very depressing experience to work with actors who don't give a shit, who don't care and take you out of it. I'm talking about actors who are on a set and instead of worrying about the scene, they sit there and have to talk up their egos by listing off all the things that they just did or are about to do. It's not bad to say 'I got this commercial and I'm excited about it!' I think that's great and you should be proud. But everything we're doing, all the struggling, studying, studying, studying, having a day job—that's so you can make the movie you're doing right now. Whichever I'm doing a movie, [I think] it doesn't matter what's going on on the set, it doesn't matter what has happened between people, it doesn't matter how tired you are. Nothing matters, except what you got on film. Because that's what lives forever. There's no disclaimer going across the bottom of the screen when the scene starts that says, 'Debbie has been up for three days, she was very tired during this scene—' and, oh yeah, she just started her cycle.' No excuses. You use what you've got and you kick ass as much as you can."

This is a good approach for any actor to take, but not an easy attitude to adopt. It can't be taught in books, you can't learn it by reading interviews with other actors. Roach agrees. "I've learned everything by doing things the wrong way. Absolutely. The one thing I do learn from my mistakes. That's why people can say, 'Ha ha, you made this ridiculous movie.' Yeah okay, the movie wasn't that good, but I learned three lessons while I was shooting that movie, and that brings me to today. I think on-the-job training can't be replaced with school. And the funny thing is, I've spent a lot of time in acting school studying very serious methods, and it's important to learn these methods right. But the things that you learn in class, you don't get to do them on the set. Maybe I wanted to sit in a chair and work on my sensory stuff—na. A lot of times you walk in, you sit down, 'Okay powder her face, then we shoot.' You don't have time to say, 'Oh, can I have 45 minutes while no one touches my hair or face or anything?' You have to make a lot of adjustments, you have to take what you've learned in class and completely rethink it, and say, 'I can sit here with 50 people running by, working or trying to talk to me. I can prepare while all that's happening.' You don't get that in class. No sleep, no food. You have to be able to incorporate that into your work."

Blat attitudes run amok in all careers, but it might also be a stigma of B-movie industry extending from the careless attitudes of the audience. "In the 'B' business, nobody's really expecting a lot of depth from you," Roach says. "[Producers have] just hired you to walk in and do your stuff and leave. I've always had a problem with first-time directors and first-time investors who say 'What's the easiest thing to make?' Most guaranteed to make money? A horror movie with nudity!

That's what I'll do!" It's such a common thought, and it's so wrong. To make a good horror movie? That's hard! You want to talk about Alfred Hitchcock—*PSYCHO!* People might argue that it's not a horror movie because it's Hitchcock, but that's the stigma. If you can successfully make a horror movie, that says a lot about your ability. Because it's all about suspending belief and getting an emotion across, getting an audience to feel something. Such a challenge, it's just such a horrible mistake that people make, to think it's easy."

Granted, not everyone shares Roach's respect for the genre. "All the time, people say [to me], 'When are you going to do something serious?' To me, *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* is serious. Do they mean if I was to do a drama, that's more serious? A horror movie should be an actor's dream, because you get to be in situations that don't normally happen. Extreme situations that call for extreme emotions. If you can really pull off those emotions, then that's the fun of acting."

Could it be possible that *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE* or *SPLIT* are the projects of her fantasies? Roach pauses for words—without, however, losing her enthusiasm.

"*SPLIT* is going to be a really exceptional film, just a mind-blowing movie. And I'm really hoping [for the same] to a certain degree for *AMERICAN NIGHTMARE*, though I don't know that it's word enough to be a cult hit. With the role that I play, which is so atypical of female roles [usually seen], that people will say, 'Here's an example of cool out-there roles for women. Crazy serial killer or strong, yet crazy, woman roles.' That would be very cool. I really have a lot of belief in this movie."

The face of B-movies may be changing things, slowly but surely. While Hollywood is still quick to resist a strong heroine in a movie unless she's

Sigourney Weaver, in the B-movie world, women can carry madhouse guns and kick badguy ass up one side and down the other—even if they do have to don bikinis or shower up first.

For the time being, Debbie remains busy—merely busy. She recently wrapped filming *OBSCURATORY BLUES*, written and directed by longtime friend Zachary Winston Smyg. Debbie also returned to the New York stage in a production of "The Crimson Thread," a play about women in Ireland set in the late 1800s, directed by *Scarlet Street Magazine* scribe Kevin Shannack (and yes, she did learn to do an Irish accent for the role). In addition to her acting, Debbie branched out into the publishing world. Starting in April, she became the official covergirl for the popular parody magazine *Cracked*, and her own book, *The B-Movie Survival Guide*, co-written with Gary Clark and Peter Schmick, became available through Amazon.com. Busy, busy woman. And it would seem that no one, particularly her, would have it any other way.

More information about Debbie Roach's upcoming projects can be found at <http://www.debbieroach.com> and <http://www.gooties.com/debbieroach>. □



From mainstream movies to stage plays, Debbie Roach has remained a true artist, dedicated to her craft.





## The 10th anniversary of writer/director Rolfe

# THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE...

By Jason Paul Collum



**A dark and thunder-filled night. A promiscuous teenage couple scamper** hand-in-hand down the creaky woodland path beyond the house, which rests on a secluded lake. They've heard rumors about the creak nearby, but ghost stories don't scare them. Besides, on this blissfully-awakening evening, a skinny dip sounds too enjoyable to pass up. As the not-so-virginal young lady strips off her bra and panties and prepares to jump into the steamy water, she hears a noise from the bushes behind her. But there's nothing to fear, her boyfriend insists, because machete-wielding maniacs only exist in horror movies. This is "real" life, he reassures her. "There's nothing out there."

Actually there is, and of course, the nude teens are doomed to meet a gruesome end. The boy will perish quickly, but the girl will have to scream and shake her breasts a lot before she meets her maker and pops up bloody and dismembered in the final reel. "So," you chuckle, "FRIDAY THE 13TH, Part X is really happening?" Well, yes, but this isn't it. And guess what? You're supposed to laugh at the undeniable stupidity these teens have shown.

Is it SCREAM? No. Another rip-off of SCREAM? Absolutely not. And, to break the heart of every post-modern horror buff, we'll share a little known secret with you, SCREAM isn't as original as everyone thinks. In fact, it's quite possible the Kevin Williamson/Wes Craven classic is a rip-off itself!

Goop if you must, but yes, this is the tarnishing news which has been alive on the Internet and in several reviews for many years. The cause? A little-known movie released ten years ago called THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE.

Lensed on 16mm in the summer of 1988 and completed in October 1990 by then 20-year-old Rolfe Kneafsky, the film debuted later that year at the Independent Feature Project (IFP) in New York City where it became the hit of the market. The film, about a group of teens vacationing in a summer home where an alien has just landed and plans to reproduce with the

# Kanefsky's "SCREAM" fest that started it all.

women and kill the men, was led by "Mike" (Craig Posk, who had seen "every horror movie on videotape." This knowledge gave him the power to know when each of his friends was going to perish because they weren't recognizing the signs of being in a scary movie.

The tongue-in-cheek self-referencing prevalent throughout the feature caught the attention of film critics from Joe Bob Briggs to *Variety*. "Thanks to the IFF," Kanefsky recalls, "We were invited to a lot of festivals. The audiences and critics were giving it really good responses." This was a blessing to the young writer/director, who had slaved over its production, trying to realize his life-long dream.

Kanefsky wrote *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE* over five days in 1987, during his senior year of high school. He says, "I had wanted to write a slasher movie because I was a huge fan of horror films. So one day I decided to sit down and see how long it would take.

"As I was writing it, I couldn't take it seriously because there were so many clichés," Kanefsky remembers. "It was screaming to be made fun of. I thought about what would happen if you put someone who was a fan of horror movies, who knew all of these clichés, into the situation. Someone who would sit in the theater and scream, 'Don't go into that room. Don't go into the woods alone!' That's how I came up with the character of Mike.

"Mike was essentially supposed to be me," Kanefsky continues. "When I was 14 and decided I wanted to be a film director, I thought about how all the famous directors got started, and realized most of them began in horror. So I knew horror was where I would have to start."

The burgeoning creator set out to master his task by renting every horror film he could get his hands on. While *THE EVIL DEAD* and *HALLOWEEN* were among the most inspiring for his craft, Kanefsky says, "I noticed a lot of lazy filmmaking. That's where the clichés really come in. *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE* is supposed to tell the horror fans we heard them, we agreed that these certain clichés were stupid."

After completing his script, Kanefsky studied filmmaking up close by getting jobs as a production assistant on flicks like the slasher opus *POSED FOR MURDER* (1989) and the terrorist adventure *THOMAS WAR* (1988). He also honed his craft by directing a number of short-on-video movies such as *STRENGTH IN NUMBERS* (a *GOONIES*-type action

thriller) and the Agatha Christie-esque *MURDER WINTER*.

After moving up to short 8mm movies like *JUST LISTEN* (which appears on a television screen during the opening reels of *TNOT*, the now college-aged Kanefsky felt he was ready to tackle his first major film, and his parents agreed. "My father, Victor Kanefsky, had been an editor on documentaries like *National Geographic* material and had also done some genre films like *GANJA & HESS* and *BLOODSUCKING FREAKS*," he smiles. "He and my mother had seen my 8mm shorts and felt I had the talent."

Though his alma mater looked down on his project, producing he "wouldn't learn anything by making a film without their guidance," the director proved them wrong and insists he learned more by venturing into the arena alone. After much exertion, he was able to make up

the credit missed from taking a semester off of school. By writing a book about his adventure (available on the official site [www.there'snothingoutthere.com](http://www.there'snothingoutthere.com)), he received college credit.

With his father as producer, the younger Kanefsky chose to make his high school script because, "It was going to be the cheapest and easiest to accomplish." Though only managing to raise \$20,000, he says it was his father who inspired him to go forward with the project. He relates, "My father told me he had once raised money to shoot a film, but didn't have enough, so he gave the money back. He swore if he ever raised money again, he would shoot the film no matter what. So we took the money we had, took a lot of deferred payments, mortgaged my parents' house, pulled in a lot of friends and we made the movie." By its completion, Kanefsky estimates the final





"Randy" (Bonnie Bowers) struggles with the alien creature as "Doreen" (Wendy Badnarz) looks on helplessly. The cast, all in their twenties, had no problem with their director, Kanefsky, being the youngest

budget to run around \$250,000-\$300,000.

Casting the feature was much easier, as the task was plopped on a gentleman named Bill Williams, who commonly cast commercials. At the request of Kanefsky, Williams looked for people who were strikingly similar to their characters, so they would essentially be playing themselves. The cast, all in their early twenties, consisted of Craig Peck as "horror freak" "Mike" (think "Randy" from SCREAM), Bonnie Powers as cynical

heroine "Stacy" (imagine Rose McGowan's "Datum" surviving SCREAM instead of Neve Campbell's "Sydney"), Brazilian import Claudia Flores as "June" ("Sydney" if she had been raped and impregnated by an alien), Wendy Badnarz as blonde bombette "Doreen" (Heather Graham's SCREAM 2 impersonation of Drew Barrymore in SCREAM, are you still with me here?), Mark Collier as "Jim" (a yock-ish version of Matthew Lillard's "Stu"), John Carhart III (a dancer in HAIRSPRAY) as

**"I had wanted to w  
So one day I d**

nice-guy "Nick," Jeff Dachis as geek "David," and Lisa Grant as "Bally," who gives the film some of its best guffaws.

Filmed in Piermont Palisades on the edge of New York and New Jersey, Kanefsky thanks the community for getting behind the film and helping make the shoot easier. "They helped out with catering and put the cast and crew up in their homes for free," he glooms. "They didn't want us to have to keep traveling back and forth to the city every day after long hours. It helped make for a really fun atmosphere on set."

His only daunting task was to convince his crew that being the youngest person on set didn't mean he was inexperienced and incapable. He proudly says, "Whenever they asked a question, I always had an answer. I knew where the camera was supposed to be and what shots I wanted. I didn't want them saying, 'Who is this kid?'"

Surprisingly, he also didn't have as much of a problem with actresses regarding the topic of nudity as he expected. "All of the actresses who auditioned were informed up front about the requirements, the importance and necessary commitment from them to these scenes," Kanefsky insists. "We confirmed their acceptance and understanding of this commitment numerous times."

While he experienced no problems with Claudia Flores due, in most part, to her native country's abundance of nude beaches, Wendy Badnarz and Bonnie Bowers did hit small glitches, which they eventually overcame. "Wendy was really nervous," he conveys, "Especially about the shower scene. I kept reassuring her the scene would be tasteful and that, in fact, we wouldn't be showing anything. That was the point of the scene—not to show anything. You always have a shower scene in horror movies for no other reason than to show a naked girl. So here we had a shower scene with a naked girl, but you only saw just above her breasts and just below them, nothing else. I think once she saw the finished product she became much more relaxed about how it would be perceived."

His struggles with Bonnie Bowers, ironically, didn't begin until after her sex scene with co-star Carhart. "Bonnie was nervous," Kanefsky begins, preening his temple, "but insisted she had no problem with it—until the day came. Then she decided she didn't want to do it. Eventually she agreed and (finished the scene). Later she got really weird and demanding. She started saying she didn't want to finish the film and didn't want the footage

write a slasher movie because I was a huge fan of horror films. I decided to sit down and see how long it would take."

used. We just kept trying to keep her from quitting."

Not holding a grudge, the director carries into one of his favorite memories of the actress: "Remember the mouse which crawls on her in the basement?" he asks excitedly. "It had been bought solely for that scene, but she fell in love with it and asked if she could keep it. So she walked around the set with it on her shoulders at all times. I saw her a few years later on *THE HOWARD STERN SHOW* and she had a mouse with her. I'm not positive it was the same one, but I'm pretty sure it was because of our movie that she became hooked on them."

Kanefsky, who cameoed as the lost student to wander through the exterior high school scene, found the rest of the filming to be educational and by most parts, a breeze. His mischievous alien, created by imageeffects Ken Quinn and Scott Hart as a cross between a lizard and a pan fish, made for a more humorous monster than the average slasher would have, and his actors relied on their best comedic wit, while simultaneously trying to play the horror elements straight.

With his first "big budget" feature in the can and winning rave at a number of festivals nationwide, one has to wonder why *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE* never garnered the same mainstream steam which carried *SCREAM* to a \$100 million-plus boxoffice a mere six years later. Kanefsky attributes poor timing and negative social circumstances as the film's worst enemies.

"There was a lot of interest," he begins, clearly frustrated. "But the horror market crashed in 1990. *NIGHTBREED* was being sold as a slasher film and Universal had no idea what to do with *TREMORS*. We were right at the crest of this huge era in horror. There were over five national publications focusing on horror movies like *Fangoria*, *Toxic Horror*, *Gorezone*, *Horror Fan*, *Slaughterhouse*, then it all just kind of collapsed in on itself. We shot *TNOT* when horror was hot, but by its release it had become a negative thing. Luckily we'd shot it as a spoof, and that's what held the interest of the critics."

"Hemdale talked about releasing it theatrically, but said we wouldn't see any money from it," he continues. "We couldn't afford to just give the movie away. Then in 1991, there was a horror film festival and we showed it to over 600 horror fans, including Brian Yuzna, who was there promoting *SOCIETY* and *THE GUYVER*. I showed *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE* and the response was

through the roof." The director smirks and admits to taking tape recorders into that shoeing and others, as proof of audience reactions consisting mostly of non-stop screaming, laughing, and cheering.

The success of the horror festival showing resulted in Kanefsky dealing with a New York lawyer. "I convinced

him if we could get a wider theatrical release it would do great business," he informs. "So he got us a showing following [the Goldie Hawn thriller] *DECEIVED* (1991). About 350 people showed up and gave it a great response."

The marginal success led the associates to hire a PR person to heavily pro-

Because of the nudity, Elenore Bowens almost didn't finish the film. Kanefsky noted after Elenore finished her sex scene, "She got really weird and demanding. We just kept trying to keep her from quitting."



# "People who had seen THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE went and saw SCREAM and really liked it, although the

made the feature by placing ads in newspapers and get more great reviews from distinguished papers like *The New York Times* and *The Post*. Although it had two major forces going against it (Superbowl Sunday and a massive blizzard), the January 1992 premiere still proved enough of a success to open the film regularly at midnight showings.

Eventually, the Lumley theaters in California caught wind of the indie's growing cult status, and decided to give the film an opportunity to prove its merit on the West Coast. With a successful initial showing at Berkeley College and more positive reviews in numerous Los Angeles journals, *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE* was soon ready to take on the crowds of the L.A. art circuit with midnight showings at The Lumley theaters.

"The first night it had about 25 people," Kanefsky starts. "The second night 30 people, the following about 40, then 60, our hope that word of mouth would carry it was working." He takes a deep breath and pauses. "Then the L.A. riots hit."

April 1992, 10 p.m. curfew meant no midnight showings. "We couldn't show the film and it lost the audience," he glumly asserts. "Everything it had been building upon was gone. Luckily we had gotten enough of a response in the pre-

ceding weeks that Prism agreed to pick it up for video release."

When *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE* finally meandered into video stores in late 1992, it was considered a moderate success, especially considering the sorry state of the horror industry. With stores purchasing few copies of any horror title unless it carried a roman numeral after the title (and even that no longer guaranteed a decent return on investment), it was a blessing that Kanefsky's pride and joy moved what he estimates to be between 6,000 to 7,000 units. He does believe, however, more copies would have shipped had the original poster art been used for the video cover. "I didn't like the video box," he attests. "It made the movie look cheaper than it should have." He was happier with the treatment it received on laser disk from Image.

After premiering on HBO to "really

high ratings in its time slot," Kanefsky decided it was time to move forward with his career and concentrate on new projects. The subsequent years found him as writer and director in a variety of genres,

delivering the wholesome of *MY FAMILY TREASURE* (1993) to the terror of *THE KILLER EYE* (1998) and the sexy shenanigans of the as yet unreleased *BUTTER SCOTCH* series. He assumed his satirical horror spoof would become a film of occasional mention and mostly obscurity, but then Christmas of 1998 brought him a veiled blessing.

"Years had passed and I figured, 'Well, it did okay,'" Kanefsky shrugs. "We didn't have any name stars and no big studio behind us. We were an independent feature and did well for what we had. Of course at that point no one would

have dreamed a phenomenon like *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT* would ever happen. So I worked on other projects, then *SCREAM* hit."

He sits back and smiles. "Everything about *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE* started up again when *SCREAM* and *SCREAM 2* came out. People who had seen *TNOT* were contacting me and asking if it had been ripped off. I went and saw *SCREAM* and really liked it, and although the plot is different, I do think the gimmick is the same.

"With Kevin Williamson being such a big horror fan I think it's entirely plausible he saw *TNOT*," Kanefsky sustains. "It's in Blockbuster stores and just about every other video chain, plus it's playing on HBO and Cinemax. The one thing I do know is about two years before *SCREAM* came out I met Jonathan Craven (*MIND RIPPERS*) at a Fangoria convention and gave him a copy of the movie. I spoke with him sometime later and he said he really enjoyed it and had given it to Wes to watch. That was the last I ever heard. Again, I don't think the film is the same, just the gimmick."

Kanefsky goes on to say he has no solid proof of whether or not Craven Sr. or Williamson saw the feature. He likewise insists, "I decided not to be bitter about it, because *SCREAM* is a good movie and it brought the horror genre back which, as a fan, I was thrilled about."



The original video box cover.

"Nick" (John Cusack II) tries to calm down the shaken "Stacy" (Bowers). How can you relax when a twisted alien 'veg wants to regurgitate every woman and destroy all of the men?



are contacting me and asking if it had been ripped off. I plot is different, I do think the gimmick is the same."

The director soon noticed articles and reviews about *SCREAM* maintaining his 1990 effort. As the next few years came, he unexpectedly discovered his film had also taken on a new life of its own on the Internet.

"I started seeing all these new reviews and articles about the movie from fans, many of them comparing it to *SCREAM*," said Kanefsky. "I found out it's been getting a huge cult following. Then people started contacting me, wanting to do interviews about the film."

"There's a guy in Montana who runs diabolicaldomino.com who had seen the movie two years earlier, came across it in a video store, and rented it again," Kanefsky chirps. "The next night, he went out with two girls who in passing conversation mentioned they had just seen 'this crazy movie' called *THERE'S NOTHING OUT THERE* and they loved it. So three people in two days were talking about this movie, so he gave it a four-star review on the Net as this little over-

officially releasing the special anniversary edition. For now, Kanefsky is just looking forward to, "retransferring the film, because it never was before. The original theatrical prints (shot in Super 16mm and blown up to 35mm) looked

("How many horror movies have been set there," Kanefsky chuckles), was caused many years ago, the renewed interest has fans wondering if the project might come back to life. "Never say never," he smiles. "THERE'S STILL NOTHING



"The shower scene is a shower scene in horror movies for no other reason than to show a naked girl," stated Kanefsky. However, Wendy Beltrami's shower was tastefully done.



looked movie and recommended people seek it out, and they have been."

The heated re-emergence of the film inspired Kanefsky to create an official website, with the help of Gene Mansey (a production assistant on the film), which contains scores of articles, reviews, and pictures. It also prompted him to try and make the film more accessible to the new generation of scare-fueled fanatics.

"We finally got the rights back from Prism, so we're going to release it theatrically and on video/DVD in a 10th Anniversary Edition," Kanefsky practically screams, smiling ear to ear. "With all the renewed attention, I figured it would be cool to do this version with commentary tracks and other features like bloopers, a photo gallery, and video footage I filmed using friends to stand in as the actors before the actual shoot so I could map out my angles."

Companies such as A-Pix, Anchor Bay, and Tromax have all expressed interest in

fantastic, but it looks washed out on the Prism release. I'm going to have the film and sound completely retransferred to give it the look it deserves."

The director also hopes his former cast will be able to match up with the new-and-improved version, but admits he's lost touch with most of them. "I'd hoped the cast would go on to bigger and more successful projects," he says, "but with the exception of Mark Colver, who occasionally does some theater and movies, and Craig Peck, who did some of the *BUTTER-SCOTCH* movies for me, everyone else basically disappeared."

"I heard Claudia Fierve moved back to Brazil and opened a hotel," he says, then adds, "I've also been told Wendy Beltrami did another film (*VAMPIRES AND OTHER STEREOTYPES*), but decided she wanted to become more involved behind the scenes. So she took some film classes and directed some short films in New York. Both Claudia and Wendy were models before they did my film, but I don't know if they pursued it afterwards."

Though a proposed sequel, set to feature Brinke Stevens and concentrate on Mike's further adventures with the alien in an abandoned maple syrup factory

OUT THERE was, in my opinion, a much better script than the first movie. Much funnier. It picked up immediately after the conclusion of the first film. The three survivors are in a car accident, from which only Mike survives. The police suspect him of the carnage, so he has to escape and capture the creature to prove his innocence. In the meantime, he runs into a family of cannibals, and realizes he's in the wrong movie. He also meets a girl who's also a horror buff and so he has a companion."

Is the film's enduring appeal strong enough to warrant a follow-up? Only sales records will decide. Its creator certainly hopes so, and he also understands its lasting legacy. "Aside from the differences in hairstyles and clothes, the material remains fresh and modern to the current trend of horror films," he says. "The conventions and clichés the film refers to most are still being done."

Rolf Kanefsky, who encourages young filmmakers to shoot movies on whatever format available to them, be it video or 8mm, shakes his head, "My only hope is that when it's re-released, people don't think we're ripped off *SCREAM*." □

# PRETTY COOL

Director Rolfe Kanefsky's quirky comedy shot a ticket to getting the respect from Hollywood

BY MITCH PERSONS

"Where PRETTY COOL originated from" relates 30-year-old Rolfe Kanefsky of his latest film, "Eight years ago I wrote a script called HORMONES: THE MOVIE. It was a PORKEYS kind of thing, and it dealt with an aphrodisiac, with a little bit of science fiction and time-travel and slapstick comedy all working together into one big mush-mash. I had wanted Dave DeCotton, a writer/director for Full Moon Productions, to film it because he had just finished a movie I admired, DR. ALIEN, and I thought HORMONES: THE MOVIE would make a good follow-up to that. Julie Strain and Bruce Stevens were all set to star in it, but because we just couldn't get the money together, my film was never made. I have no regrets about that because I wrote HORMONES: THE MOVIE quickly, very quickly, and when I finished it there were some problems which I, the screenwriter, had absolutely no idea how to solve."

"Now we flash forward to April, 2000, when I attempted a second draft of HORMONES...which eventually became PRETTY COOL. I also wrote this quickly, but this time there were no glitches, either in the script or in getting the movie filmed. We rounded up a producer, Alain Sirtzky (the EMMANUELLE films, THE CURVE, THE CLICK), pulled \$5 million together, and shot the movie in three-and-a-half weeks, with me directing."

"The plot of this comedy is that there is this nerdy, geeky little kid guy named Howard Duckell—his name comes from HOWARD THE DUCK—who is about to graduate high school. As every high school kid, he wants to be cool, and his role model in life is Tom Cruise. The opening of the film is actually a parody of the beginning of RISKY BUSINESS, complete with the sunglasses and the cigarette. Howard's first line is, 'The dream is always the same. In the dream, I am Tom Cruise. I am the epitome





OL!

ould be his  
e deserves.





(1) Sandra Knaus (Chuck) invades the cheerleaders' locker room. (2) Gaby Gaspard (Tiffany) was 'way more outgoing than myself.'

of cool,' and then Howard goes into all sorts of over-the-top antics of what Tim has done in all his movies, and the camera pulls back to reveal Howard in a three-piece suit on a raft in the middle of a swimming pool, surrounded by 15 girls in bikini—this is the ultimate male fantasy sort of deal—and then the story jumps to the real world, where he's clumsy, awkward with girls, a never-really-getting-them type of person. He's late to graduation, and runs into his new next-door neighbor, Tiffany, who is the girl of his dreams, and immediately falls for her, both physically and literally: he knocks her to the ground and falls on top of her. After a brief, embarrassing confrontation, Howard learns that Tiffany is in his town for the entire summer and everything appears great, until Howard finds out he got an incomplete in one of his classes, which means that he won't graduate and has to attend summer school. Well, going to summer school is the last thing Howard wants to do, especially after meeting Tiffany. So in an attempt to get out of it, he decides to break in-



to his school while everyone's graduating and change the grades on the principal's computer. Unfortunately for Howard, at the same time, there is an experiment taking place in Eastern Europe dealing with increased mental capacity and reading people's minds and mind control. There is an overload of the system and some of the data escapes into cyberspace just as Howard happens to log on, and while he's fiddling with the wires, he gets zapped by this power, and suddenly finds that he's got the ability to read people's minds and manipulate their actions through thoughts.

"On discovering that power, Howard and his best friend Chuck, who, like Howard, is always trying to get the girls, spend the summer playing with the powers and having a good time with mind manipulation. Of course, after a while, Howard comes to the realization that he can indeed be like Tom Cruise, but the power is more of a problem than it's worth. In *RISKY BUSINESS*, there is that scene where Rebecca De Mornay comes swim-



(T) Director Rade Kerešević going over a scene with Swedish actress Cecilia Bergqvist. (G) Playboy's Miss August 2005, Summer Allure also has a small role in the film.

tering into Cruise's house, says, 'Are you ready for me... Ralph?' and then the two of them go into that wild seduction, with the wind blowing the patio doors open and leaves and twigs flying around. We do a parody of that in *PRETTY COOL*. The first few seconds are done pretty much shot for shot, with the girl saying, 'Are you ready for me...Howard,' but then, all hell breaks loose. The wind gets stronger and stronger, lawn chairs and garbage cans and garbage start getting blown into the room, and Howard just can't handle it, or the girl. By the end of the film, Howard learns to feel happy about himself, learns to love, and gets the girl of his dreams.

"That's the basic wrap-up, with the film being a mixture of *ZAPPED*, *WEIRD SCIENCE*, and *AMERICAN PIE*, but that's just the guideline. What *PRETTY COOL* does is give a lot of talented people the opportunity to show off their slapstick abilities. Ever since I was a little kid, I've adored slapstick comedy, the films that Abbott and Costello



and Buster Keaton made, Peter Sellers's *PINK PANTHER* movies, John Belushi in *THE BLUES BROTHERS*. With *PRETTY COOL*, I wanted to incorporate some of the physicalities these comedians were known for, plus add some over-the-top, R-rated jokes of my own.

"Now, even with a good script, if you don't find the right cast, the whole thing is never going to work. We had an incredibly short period of casting—about a week—but we got very, very lucky and found all the right people. Howard is being played by Will Burles, a very good young actor. This is his first feature. He had just finished the Harvard acting thing and previously moved out to Los Angeles, where we were casting the film. He's being compared to a young Tom Hanks, which he says he is very happy with. The girl that Howard falls in love with, Tiffany, is played by Alexis Thorpe. She is 19 years old, has done a lot of modeling, and was actually discovered by James Woods at a golf tournament! She's gone on to play a supermodel in *ROCKY AND*



Will Burt Foster ("Howard") falls in love with Alexis Thorne ("Tiffany"), holding "Banzhine" the cat. Actor James Woods actually discovered Thorne at a golf tournament

BULLWINKLE and then a vampire seductress in a new film, *THE FORSAKEN*, which should be released theatrically in January, 2001. Then, playing Howard's sister, Paula, kind of a Jennifer Grey (*FERRIS BUELLER'S DAY OFF*) type, is an amazing actress named Amy Brannette. She's 36, and up until *PRETTY COOL* did mostly sketch comedy. She performed one routine where, doing the Tracy Ullman/Carol Burnett bit, she played 26 different comic characters. We also have Cindy Campbell, Holly Sampson (*PUMP UP THE VOLUME*, *OTHER MEN'S WIVES*), Swedish actress Cecilia Bergqvist, French actress Sandrine Bonnaire, and Playboy's Miss August 2000, Summer Altice. In cameo roles there are Shauna O'Brien (*ZORRITA*, *SUMMER TEMPTATIONS 2*) as Dr. Maggie Henness, the scientist that creates the device that starts the whole plot going, Tiffany Sheno (*TROMEO AND JULIET*, *CHICKBOXIN UNDERGROUND*), and, as the high school principal, character actor Willem Knight.

"The reason I'm so excited about *PRETTY COOL* is that not only did we find women

who were very pretty, but we found comedians and people who were willing to go crazy. In a lot of other comedies, you have guys who are funny, and do all their routines and pratfalls and stuff like that. The women are pretty and are usually put up on the pedestal. In *PRETTY COOL*, I let the women get involved in the comedy, let them take the falls, do all the physical stuff, and just be like the guys, which, I think, was the main attraction for the actresses. The women have said that they never had roles like these, where they're able to get in on the jokes and be funny.

"To show what I mean, Howard comes home and his sister Paula, who is always bowling him out for one reason or another, and two of her friends, one of whom is Summer (Altice) are on lawn chairs in bikinis, sunbathing. Howard has just discovered his telepathic potential, and he and Paula get into a verbal tiff, and she says to him, 'Oh, you're full of hot air,' and unbeknownst, that pretty much makes her fart. And then Howard thinks about that and he tries it again, and sure enough, she farts again. And then Summer starts saying,

'What's wrong with you?' and he makes her fart. And then Howard starts this whole fart concerto with the three girls, which is done to the accompaniment of the Blue Danube music. So here you've got these gorgeous women, one of them Miss August, firing up a storm, and the thing is, these beautiful actresses are willing to do this. They have no problems being completely humiliated with this pie-in-the-face, or rather, air-from-the-derriere, kind of material.

"There are a lot of comic highlights in this movie. In one sequence, Paula gets possessed by a cat. A cat enters her body, so she becomes this cat, and the cat happens to be in heat, so she starts acting like a cat in heat and that makes for some pretty outrageous over-the-top stuff that Paula does, including going into an erotic dance sequence in a bar, trying to entice three guys into giving her some feline loving.

"Some satire was injected, as well. We wanted to show that all cheerleaders, contrary to popular thought, were not bombos. At the same time, we wanted to make a commentary on the recent rash of intellectual

high school movies that seem to be popping up all over the place. Actress Brandy Miller played one of the cheerleaders, so we had Brandy do a cheer to 'Do be or not to be,' from Hamlet. Shakespeare was probably rolling over in his grave, but we thought the scene was a gentle poke at the whole classical teen angst film genre, like *TEN THINGS I HATE ABOUT YOU*, based on *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *CRUEL INTENTIONS*, which was *Dangerous Liaisons*.

"We improvised a lot. I encouraged the actors to go on tangents and ad-lib things. At one point, Chuck, Howard's friend, invades the girls' locker room, and then gets beaten up by one of the girls. After being knocked almost senseless, Chuck looks up at the girl and ad-libs, 'Do you know that you just stepped on my jerk-off hand?' Everybody broke up on that one.

"We even got suggestions from the crew. At the very end of the film, the principal, who is a very prim-and-proper guy, finally has gotten himself a date. He is sitting behind his desk, dressed very formally, and is chatting with some of the students. The students

walk out of his office, and the principal mutters to himself, 'These crazy young people.' That was the punch line, but there was no zip to the scene, it just wasn't working. One of the assistant directors whispered something to me, and I in turn whispered something to Bill [Knight, the actor playing the principal]. We broke for lunch and after we came back, we played the scene again. The students left, Bill delivered his line, then got up from behind his desk and walked to the window. The camera pulled back to reveal that he was wearing stockings and a garter belt!

"Because of all this improvisation, the actors started competing with each other as to who could do bigger pratfalls, deliver the funnier lines, etc. They actually went onto the set when they weren't needed to watch the other actors perform. Kind of a rivalry developed, although it was far from a hostile one.

"The fact is, we had very few problems with making PRETTY COOL. There was only one hang-up, and that was filming the high school graduation scene. We had a school set up, but when the officials saw how big the project was, they backed out. We had the costumes, the prop diplomas, a band, all ready, and no high school. What we decided to do was to take the Larry Cohen approach and just go into some real high schools, film some real graduations, and try to match up the shots later. Unfortunately, the first school we went into was an all-girls' school, where everyone wore white graduation gowns—awfully hard to match that. The second school was much better, where the girls still wore white, but the boys wore dark blue, which happened to be the color of the costumes we already had. On the very last day of shooting, we finally found a high school in Santa Valley, California. With the real high school, and matching up the stock footage, we somehow managed to get the scene done, but for a while it was pretty sticky going."



Beautiful Holly Givens, who was 19 when she was in the movie, is the only female making an appearance in the film.

MARIO BAVA'S HIGH FASHION APPROACH

TO MURDER AND INTRIGUE

# BLOOD AND BLACK LACE

**M**ario Bava's 1964 slasher film **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE** hit American screens in a truncated version, which was slashed again when it was sold to TV. VCI Home Entertainment has restored the film to its original European release version for release on DVD. While now a familiar theme, Bava's dark, brooding film was an original at the time. A mad killer is bumping off the models of a famous fashion house, Contessa Christina. Mary Dawn Arden had been a model in the U.S. when she decided to move to the fashion runways of Europe. A quick study, Arden learned several European languages bossing of a self-improvement show in **JULIET OF THE SPIRITS**, a rather peepshow role since later in life Arden became a successful instructor and business woman specializing in communications and self-improvement.

A former fashion model herself, actress Mary Dawn Arden plays Peggy, one of the models in an elegant house of couture who gets murdered.



When the casting call came for an actress who could play a model, Arden's agent knew he had a natural. "I was already well known as an actress," said Arden. "And since I was also a model the agent sent me up. I had already worked with Fellini and a lot of top directors. I could always model full time and when an acting job came along I would go and audition and if I got the job, I would stop modeling for that period of time."

Bava has less than half a dozen films to his credit as a director when he made **BLOOD AND BLACK LACE**. There was an immediate rapport between actress and director when Arden appeared for her audition. "Mario Bava loved me and I loved him, which is how I got the part," said the actress. "He was divine, a true Renaissance man." It wasn't until Arden returned to the States in 1960 that she discovered how popular Bava had become. "I had no idea Mario Bava's work was so respected and that they were studying him all over the world in film schools and he's considered one of the great filmmakers of this genre."

When a beautiful fashion model is brutally slain, her missing diary becomes the focus of a masked killer. In a fatal turn of events, Arden's character, Peggy, finds the book. "She was a model and obviously she's had this bad experience," Arden explained. "She is afraid that the diary will give it away. She doesn't read the whole diary so she doesn't know other people are looking for it. She gets killed because they think there's something incriminating in there."

While Peggy's death scene is long and drawn out, Arden's experiences, although not fatal, were almost as torturous. "I must say, it's a miracle that I didn't get killed," she said. "The fight scenes where he comes in and I'm burning the diary and I get knocked around were pretty rough." Especially when mats to cushion her fall never materialized. "The stage hands couldn't

BY DAN SCAPPEROTTI

put the mattresses down at the beginning or they would be in the shot. So when I'm falling they were supposed to throw a mattress down so that when I land, I land on the mattress instead of the cold marble floor. Needless to say, things go so fast when you're doing an action scene. I always wound up on the marble and never on the mattress because I couldn't turn around to see where I was falling and the guys never seemed to get it in the right place."

**F**or the actress, the worst five days of the shoot were those occupied with Peggy's death and subsequent sequences with her body. Especially one cold and hither night. "After I get hurt to death there are a lot of scenes where they drag my body around," she laughed. "I almost got killed in that scene where the girl discovers my body in the trunk of the car. You've got to imagine that it's the middle of the night. We're out in the country. It's freezing cold and everybody's exhausted. On this particular car in Europe there is a spring latch so you have to know when you open it that the hinge locks open, otherwise it comes back on a spring and closes with a lot of force. My body is in the trunk because I'm supposed to be dead. As soon as the trunk is opened they're shooting and I'm supposed to roll out so you see this horrible corpse."

"I spent four hours a day getting that horrible burn makeup applied, which was a work of art but pretty scary. Mario had said to the girl, 'Make sure before you jump back and scream that the trunk of the car has snapped open,' because even though I'm supposed to be dead, I had to physically roll my head out. Of course, this girl—I won't say anything about her, but she wasn't too smart—didn't snap it open and as I roll my head out this thing came back with all this force. It was a miracle I wasn't killed because the lock protrudes about four inches and could have put my eye out. The trunk of the car came down and hit me and I thought my nose was broken."

"To this day, I can still remember the agony and the pain. I was exhausted and cold and I went into shock. Mario stepped shooting and he poked my nose in ice. He held me for about an hour. It was the end of my career. I still have a scar from it. It's a miracle it didn't break the bone. That was the worst experience I ever had on a film. I was so black and blue. I literally spent five days as a dead body where they dragged me around, up and down stairs. I made some tough moves but that was the toughest. I never got paid for it. They stuffed us. I don't even know whether Mario ever got paid."

After giving up her film/modeling career, Arden spent over four years in Latin America as marketing director and general manager for Helena Rubinstein, International. She has since become an international consultant and President of Arden Associates, a New York-based company that specializes in marketing communications. Her firm prepares both executives and individuals for public speaking, business presentations, and even those sudden appearances on shows like 60 MINUTES.

Arden is also involved in academia, serving not only as a member of New York University's Commission for the Arts and Humanities, but she is also on the faculty in NYU's Department of Culture and Communications. If ever there was one, it's Arden who is the Renaissance Woman. □



(7) Annette Bening discovers the corpse of Mary McCormack Arden in the trunk of her car. "I almost got killed in that scene!"  
(8) Arden was "stuffed" when after filming was completed, no one got paid.



Known in Tinseltown circles as *The Chameleon* for her ability to portray an exhaustive array of characters, we caught up with one of the most prolific actresses of the 70s, 80s, and 90s.

# Pamela Susan Shoop

By Jason Paul Collum

At first glance you recognize her chestnut hair, soft pink lips, smoldering green eyes, and a smile so warm and welcoming you feel you've known her for years. And, through the magic of television and film, you have. For nearly 30 years, she's graced both screens, delivering performances ranging from the tortured heroine of the early 1970's soap opera *RETURN TO PEYTON PLACE*, to the giggly head cheerleader of 1979's *DALLAS COWBOYS CHEERLEADERS* and a not-so-naïve mistress in the camp favorite *EMPIRE OF THE ANTS*. She was even among Michael Meyer's most famous victims as she dipped into a deadly Jacuzzi in 1981's *HALL-LOWEEN II*.

For a generation of young men, Pamela Susan Shoop was the sweet girl-next-door-turned-vixen they adored. Born to a celebrated military pilot and Hollywood legend mother, Shoop grew up in the spotlight, among celebrities like Nancy and Ronald Reagan, Ann Miller, and Art Linkletter. Fellow high school alumni included Richard Dreyfuss, Albert Brooks, Candice Bergen, and Bob Feller.

Shoop thanks her mother, Julie Bishop, for many of her life's best lessons, including her decision to become an actress. Bishop, who starred in 84 films alongside legends like John Wayne, Humphrey Bogart, and Errol Flynn, was



Shoop began her career in 1972, and has since over 80 TV shows and films.

an inspiration to her daughter. (Additionally, Bishop also starred in films like *TARZAN*, *THE FEARLESS* with Buster Crabbe, *THE BLACK CAT* opposite Bela Lugosi and Boris Karloff, and *THE BOHEMIAN GIRL* alongside Laurel and Hardy under her given name of Jacqueline Wells.)

"She was doing a play when I was 16 called 'Tunnel of Love' with Bob Cummings," Shoop says, perched amongst the noontime power lunchers at Jerry's Famous Deli in Studio City, CA. "I would tour with her and had such great fun. I just fell in love with acting because of it."

The actress also credits her late father, Major General Clarence A. Shoop, a two-star general who was the Vice President of Howard Hughes Aircraft Company and a reconnaissance pilot during WWII, who flew the first photographic mission over Omaha Beach in Normandy on D-Day. "I was brought up with a wonderful family," the younger Shoop begins. "You think of a General as very cold and strict, but my father always had a smile on his face. There was discipline, but it was given with love and encouragement. I was [taught] I could accomplish anything I set my mind to."

Indeed, and judging from her resume of over 80 television and film credits, she used her parents' advice to its fullest extent. Known in Hollywood circles as "the chameleon" for her ability to run the gamut of personalities on screen, Shoop began her illustrious career in the 1973 Oscar-nominated short film *FROG STORY*.

Shoop's first major exposure to American audiences, however, still garners her recognition from fans. "[It] really amazes me," she exclaims. "I played Allison



MacKenzie on the daytime soap **RETURN TO PEYTON PLACE** (1973-74) and people still recognize me."

Though asked to tackle other soap roles after **RETURN TO PEYTON PLACE**'s demise, the actress preferred to pursue other areas of the small screen. Her early list of starring guest spots on television shows plays like a retro-'70s enthusiast's ultimate fantasy: **NIGHT GALLERY**, **THE FBI**, **THE ROOKIES**, **MANNIX**, **THE MOD SQUAD**, **SWITCH**, **GEMINI MAN**, **EMERGENCY!**, **WONDER WOMAN**, **KEEPER OF THE WILD CODE R**, **THE INCREDIBLE HULK**, **KAZ, VEGA'S CHIPS**, and **BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY**, to name a few.

In the midst of her frequent television guest spots, Shoop ventured into the next medium, running for her life and keeping a straight face in the cult horror confection **EMPIRE OF THE ANTS** (1977), directed by Bert I. Gordon, connoisseur of camp feats like **THE FOOD OF THE GODS** (1976), **PICTURE MOMMY** (1980), and **SATAN'S PRINCESS** (1980).

The cult pic follows a group of real estate developers (Joan Collins, Jacqueline Scott, Robert Lansing and Robert Pine among them) who are stranded on an island where man-eating ants have grown to enormous proportions. Its legendary status as an awfully enjoyable movie (critic James O'Neill wrote, "Cinzy special FX rub shoulders with uncomfortable-looking actors muttering ridiculous dialog") is one Shoop (who played feisty heroine "Corven Bradford") finds easy to explain.

As she recalls, "The sound man had a fight with the director towards the end of the shoot and threw all of the audio tapes into the swamp. We lost everything! So the entire movie had to be looped—every pant, every grunt, every scream. The sound and our voices and actions never mesh."

The ultimate in actors dedicated to their craft, however, comes from one of



Shoop's most frightening recollections: "When we were hired to do the movie, we found out there were going to be crocodiles in the waters we'd be shooting scenes in," she chuckles, then throws her arms up in the air. "We were guaranteed there would be a ranger on set to shoot any crocodiles which came near us or tried to attack. The day we filmed the scenes in the water the crew stood on a raft and fed donuts to them! So when we went to shoot the scene in the boat the crocodiles kept coming over to the boat and swimming around us. And there was NO ranger to watch over us!"

Her time away from the set was no R&R either. She continues, "There were gun shots at the motel we stayed at and we weren't allowed to leave our rooms. The women weren't allowed to go down to the bars by themselves. It was a dangerous area. But we shot over Thanksgiving and Christmas and became a very tight group of people."

The unbreakable actress followed her swampy ordeal with another feature film, the 1978 drama **ONE MAN JURY**. More spots on a variety of shows, including multiple episodes of **BUCK ROGERS & THE 25th CENTURY** and **VEGA'S**, also came, plus many made-for-television movies like **HAROLD ROBBINS 79 PARK AVENUE** (1977) and **THE DALLAS COWBOY CHEERLEADERS** (1979).

The actress proudly says, "THE DALLAS COWBOY CHEERLEADERS was, at the time, the highest-rated movie-of-the-week ever, except for **ROOTS**. I had such a great time doing it."

Her success in the television medium can be attributed to what Shoop calls, "loyalty from producers at Universal. Glen Larson was one of them. He considered me his good luck charm for a while. Whenever he would use someone else besides me in a pilot, the show wouldn't sell. But they always sold if I was in the pilot. There isn't one I did which didn't get picked up. So I became his superstition."

Shoop's ties to Universal proved in-

Shoop demonstrates her character-like abilities on TV screen like **BUCK ROGERS** (top), with LOVE BOAT's Lauren Tewes in **DALLAS COWBOYS CHEERLEADERS** (clock), and with David Hasselhoff in **KNOTT RIDER** (below). Her movies include **EMPIRE OF THE ANTS** (above) and **DEAD ON ARRIVAL** (below, E).



vainable in 1981, when she received the role of "Nurse Karen" in the hit *HALLOWEEN II*. In fact, to her amazement, the film remains her most successful and recognized role. "Unbelievable," she exclaims. "I'd never seen the original *HALLOWEEN* (1978) and didn't want to do it because it was a horror movie. I figured I'd already done *EMPIRE OF THE ANTS*, so one horror credit was enough. My agent, however, insisted I do it. So I did, and, lo and behold, it's where I received my most loyal group of fans!"

Comparative today, *HALLOWEEN II* was in 1981 what *SCREAM 2* was in 1997: the movie with which to be associated. The original *HALLOWEEN* had bankrolled an astounding amount of money and became (until 1996's *SCREAM* and 1998's *THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT*) the most successful independent film in history. Directed by Rick Rosenthal (*THE BIRD'S II LAND'S END*), *HALLOWEEN II* picked up immediately after the events of the original film.

"I really didn't know what *HALLOWEEN* was. I'd never seen it. So Rick and [producer] Debra Hill set up a screening of

when they pulled it off, but my hair was severely damaged."

Shoop also confirms she still receives residual checks, the "bonus of being in a movie which is practically guaranteed to be shown annually," she laughs. "It always comes back to haunt me. I can't believe it's still such a popular film."

One thing she doesn't understand are the two alternate versions of the film's conclusion. "I always end up seeing the television version, which is different from the theatrical version," she informs. "In the original version, Laurie Strode is in the ambulance and Jimmy (Lance Guest - *JAWS*, *THE REVENGE*) sits up behind her with a sheet over him like a ghost. Then they dive off together crying. In the television and video versions she's alone in the ambulance. I don't know why they changed it, because in the cut version Jimmy passes out in the car where Laurie is hiding, then he's never seen again. It doesn't make sense." Another situation also reeks uneasy with the actress, both for the scene's purpose and her hesitant involvement.

As Nurse Karen prepares to dip into the hot tub of death, she drops her towel, allowing for ample exposure of her breasts.

Minute later, during the gruesome melting phase of her death, her naked body is repeatedly pulled

from the water and exposed for titillation and the contrast of her beautiful body vs. her horrifically-mutilated face. Shoop doesn't buy into the latter half.

"I wanted Karen to be modest because she was a nurse on duty in a hospital and was supposed to be very intelligent," she begins, shaking her head. "In the original film, PJ Soles' character ('Lynda') was a free-spirited



From played postcard-victim "Nurse Karen" in 1981's *HALLOWEEN II*, her most successful role to date. "My agent insisted I do it. It's where I received my most loyal group of fans."

ter I got hired and we watched it. Even throughout the shoot I still didn't realize it was going to be such a big success. Then after it came out, it hit me because all these great reviews started coming out and mentioning me! My agent called and said, 'See, I told you, you needed to do that!' So then I decided to go see it in the theater and find out what all the hullabaloo was about."

Working with a cast of professionals added to Shoop's fondness for the follow-up. "Jamie Lee Curtis was great," she smiles. "She was wonderful and supportive. She'd be crawling around in the cold parking lot at 4 a.m. with barely anything on and scraping her nails on the pavement. She was put through a lot of tests. We all wore. But she was young and had a lot of energy and was willing to do anything. She gave 100%."

For the most part, Shoop recalls her time on the set of *HALLOWEEN II* with fondness, though there were a few mishaps along the way. Her infamous death scene in particular, during which she and actor Leo Rossi (*MANIAC COP 2*) take a dip in a steamy Jacuzzi, only for him to be strangled and her to be drowned while having her face melted off in scalding water, created a less than comfortable vibe. "They put latex on my face and placed a needle filled with Vaseline under the latex and filled it up more and more with each shot. My skin was fine

inasmuch, so it was more acceptable. But Karen was supposed to be a professional adult who wouldn't so willingly jump into a hot tub."

Filming the scene proved to be the actress's most difficult on an emotional level. "We shot the nude scene in two days and it became increasingly uncomfortable for me," she divulges. "The second day I cried all the way to the set. I didn't want to do it again. At one point Rick said to the crew that they should all film the scene in their underwear to make me more comfortable, and all of the men flat-out refused. I said, 'See! It's not so easy!'"

She credits Ross and Debra Hill with helping her accomplish the scene with dignity. "Leo was wonderful because I had never done nudity before. He was so respectful and protective. He was actually more nervous about his own nudity than he was about mine," she laughs. "Debra was very protective of us both—one of the advantages of having a female producer. At one point they wanted to take off all my clothes and show me getting into the tub fully nude, which wasn't in my contract. I knew it would wind up in *Defense* somewhere and didn't want to do it, and she really stood up for me."

Surprisingly, when asked if she would do the scene over, given the opportunity, Shoop offers an interesting response. "There are two parts to that answer. If I was then who I am now, I'd deal with it a lot better," she confirms. "Back then I was very shy. It was hard for me. I'd asked for and been promised a



closed set, but at one point I counted 19 people in the room!"

A glimmer twinkles from Shoop's eye as she continues, "The second part of the answer is that I probably wouldn't do it now because of my husband..." she smiles, "...who used to be a priest."

If you're Catholic or something close to it, your mouth must likely just dropped into your lap. Don't feel bad, because a similar effect occurred nationwide. Not to say their situation is unique, as priests leaving their orders to marry has been a growing phenomenon for several decades. What made Shoop and Terrence A. Sweeney, her husband of 13 years, stand out was their very public stance on their union.

Sweeney, a five-time Emmy-winning writer and author of four books, had already been struggling with the historical issues of celibacy within the Church when he met the actress. After a large number of emotional conflicts were placed behind them and they were well on the path to proving to the world their love was real, Shoop picked up a pen and with her husband, co-authored a 1993 best-selling book based on their experiences, titled *What God Hath Joined*.

As Shoop recalls, "When he left the Church to be with me it was a scandal. Over 100,000 priests have left the Church for the same reason. The scandal surrounding us, however, was due to how vocal Terry was about it when he was told to either destroy his notes (11 years worth of research) about the celibacy laws throughout history, or leave the Jesuit Order after 24 years of service." Sweeney refused.

"On the day we married," Shoop proudly states, "we held a press conference. He said he loved me and he loved God and he loved the Church and there was no reason why all three couldn't be compatible. We started our own non-profit organization AMADUM (translation "Love God") which helps priests and women in love."

While creating real-life drama of her own, Shoop continued to bring Hollywood drama into the homes of millions of Americans. With *HALLOWEEN II* a boxoffice hit, the actress was in high de-



Pretty Poo posed a book with her husband, Terry, who left the priesthood to be with her.

mured, repeating chores on *CHIPS*, *KNIGHT RIDER*, *THE FALL GUY*, *B.J. & THE BEAR*, and tackling new shows like *T.J. HOOPER*, *FAME*, *MASQUERADE*, *WHIZ KIDS*, *I HAD THREE WIVES*, and *SCARECROW AND MRS. KING*.

Throughout the remainder of the 1980's and 1990's, appearing frequently in shows like *MURDER, SHE WROTE*, *TALES OF THE GOLD MONKEY*, *SIMON & SIMON*, *THE LAW & HARRY McGRAW*, *THE HIGHWAY MAN*, *DANGEROUS CURVES*, *KUNG FU: THE LEGEND CONTINUES*, and television pics like *THE ROUSTERS* (with Mima Rogers) and *The Late Jan Varney*.

With a resume so extensive, one has to wonder why Shoop has been absent from both screens since 1996 and what she's been up to since. Though some blame is placed on a legfoot injury requiring multiple surgeries over the past few years, Shoop points a knowing finger towards the youth-obsessed culture of Hollywood.

"I'm in a certain age range which typically doesn't work," she states very mat-

ter of fact. "I look at a lot of the people who were older than myself and were working when I was younger, and they're not working at all now. Most roles are for 20-year-olds, so it's a lot harder now. If I could work the rest of my life as an actress I would because I love it so much. It's what I do." Don't think she's wallowing in self-pity, though. "I've been in the age range where I'm too old to play a young character, but too young to play an older character. I'm not sure where I fit in now, but I'd love to go full circle and do a soap opera again. I also got into the writing with my husband and so I'm focused more there now too. I am, however, looking forward to more film and television work in the upcoming year."

While she awaits the call for *HALLOWEEN VIII* with baited breath (just kidding), Shoop continues to keep herself busy with not only writing, but also serves a number of charities and groups including Good Tidings, the National Charity League and ARCS: Achievement.

ment Rewards for College Scientists. She also offers a bit of advice to the ingenuous swimming cast calls.

"Learn your job," she insists. "I've been told for years by casting directors there are two types of actresses in this town. The ones you want to hire for a role and the ones you want to hire for a good time. I was always taken seriously from day one. If you ever want to make it in this town don't ever start off playing games. You play a game once and that's it. Learn your craft, learn how to walk and talk at the same time and how to be a professional."

With a career spanning 30 years and a resume bristling with history's most prominent shows, movies, and stars, Pamela Susan Shoop obviously followed her own advice. In doing so, she has positioned herself to sit alongside her legendary mother as a screen goddess. □



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# LETTERS

## KUDOS TO TRACI LORDS AND FIRST WAVE

I really enjoyed your **FIRST WAVE** article in *Femme Fatales* (10:1).

Honestly, I would have never picked it up if it didn't have a huge six-page article on the women who have appeared as guest cast on **FIRST WAVE**, and a Traci Lords article to boot! It was quite informative and (great) for all the readers who are info-junkies like myself. I especially love Sebastian (Spence) and Traci in a semi-state of undress on the cover.

Thanks for covering **FIRST WAVE**. I very much look forward to reading more about the show in your magazine.

Joe Crichton  
jo\_crichton@yahoo.com

## A JOB WELL DONE

I recently received a copy of *Femme Fatales* (10:1) which contained an article on my film, **DRAINAGE**.

I found the article well written and entertaining, as well as rather flattering. I was particularly pleased to find



(Top) Sebastian Spence and Traci Lords stars together in **FIRST WAVE**. This striking shot was the cover for **FF** Vol. 10:1. (Left) Also featured in the same issue, Georgia Haze gets dragged down a bathtub drain in Seth Pepp's **DRAINAGE**.

my homage to **A PLUMBING WE WILL GO** recognized. These little things are very gratifying to the artist. Thanks again!

Brett Piper  
www.kinetomage.com

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